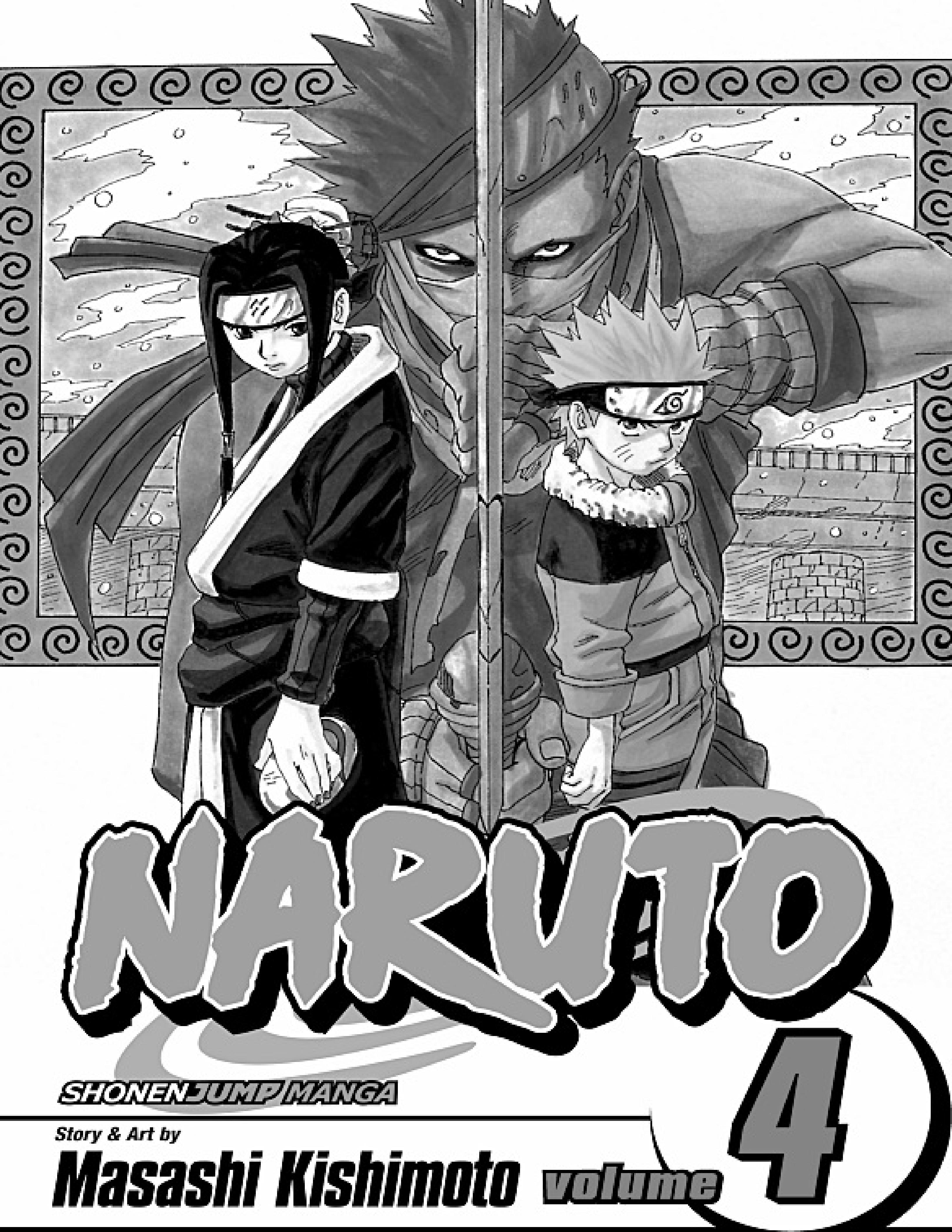
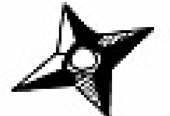

NARUTO
SHONEN JUMP MANGA
Story & Art by
Masashi Kishimoto
volume 4





岸本斉史

Thank you for your constant fan letters.
When I'm tired...
When I'm bored...
When I'm groaning in pain...
When I'm sleepy...
They always help to flip my heart's switch.
I read them all.
Thanks truly!!

—Masashi Kishimoto, 2000



Author/artist Masashi Kishimoto was born in 1974 in rural Okayama Prefecture, Japan. After spending time in art college, he won the Hop Step Award for new manga artists with his manga **Karakuri** ("Mechanism"). Kishimoto decided to base his next story on traditional Japanese culture. His first version of **Naruto**, drawn in 1997, was a one-shot story about fox spirits; his final version, which debuted in **Weekly Shonen Jump** in 1999, quickly became the most popular ninja manga in Japan.



NARUTO VOL. 4
The SHONEN JUMP Graphic Novel Edition

This graphic novel contains material that was originally published in English in **SHONEN JUMP** #15-18.

STORY AND ART BY MASASHI KISHIMOTO

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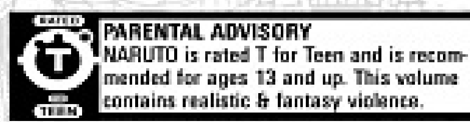
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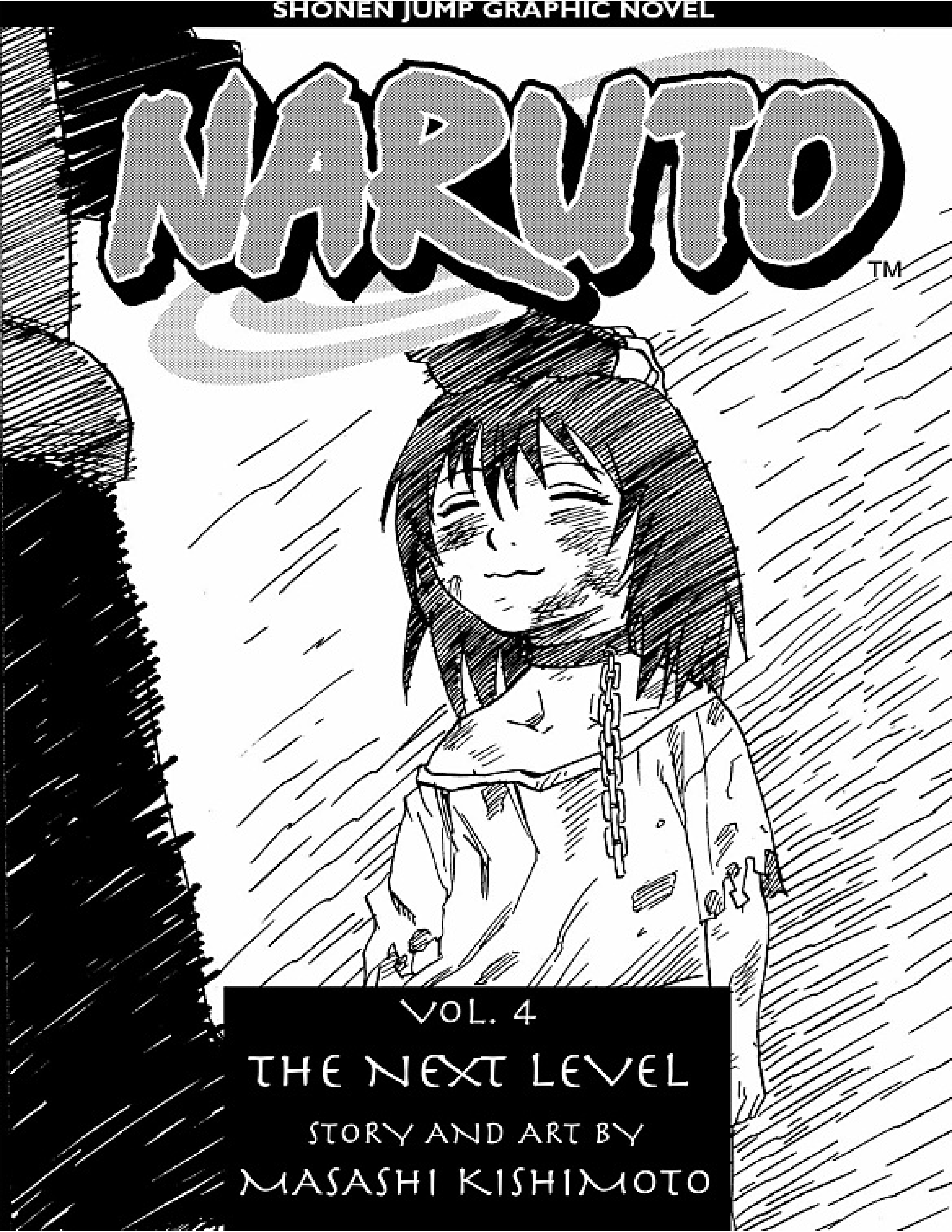
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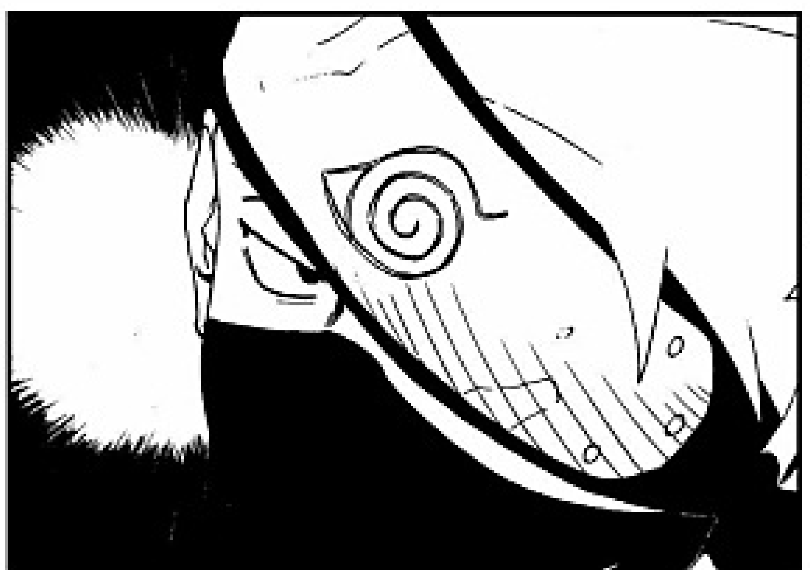
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SHONEN JUMP GRAPHIC NOVEL
NARUTO™
VOL. 4
THE NEXT LEVEL
STORY AND ART BY
MASASHI KISHIMOTO



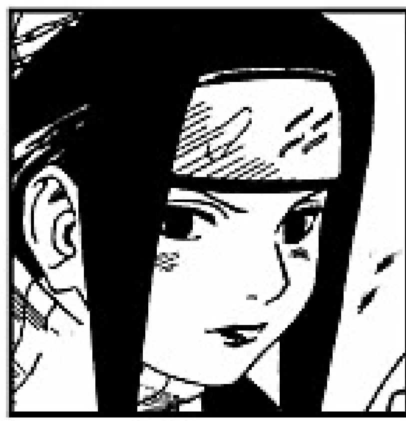
KAKASHI カカシ

The elite ninja assigned to train Naruto, Sasuke, and Sakura. His *sharingan* ("mirror-wheel eye") allows him to reflect and mimic enemy *ninjutsu*.



ZABUZA 再不斬

A ruthless ninja assassin and mass-murderer known as "The Demon." He specializes in techniques involving water and mist.



HAKU 白

A mysterious orphan who befriends Naruto. Naruto doesn't realize that his new friend is Zabuza's loyal masked assistant, who fights with chiropractic needles.



TAZUNA タズナ

An old bridge-builder struggling to bring prosperity to the Land of Waves. The evil millionaire Gato has hired Zabuza to stop him from completing his newest bridge.

THE STORY SO FAR...

Twelve years ago, a destructive nine-tailed fox spirit attacked the ninja village of Konohagakure. The *Hokage*, or village champion, defeated the fox by sealing its soul into the body of a baby boy. Now that boy, Uzumaki Naruto, has grown up to become a ninja-in-training, learning the art of *ninjutsu* with his classmates Sakura and Sasuke.

Tired of easy exercises, Naruto and his classmates make the mistake of asking their teacher, Kakashi, for a really hard assignment... and find themselves in the Land of Waves, protecting a bridge-builder named Tazuna. But the job turns truly dangerous when the notorious assassin Zabuza shows up. While Kakashi holds off Zabuza and Sakura protects Tazuna, Naruto and Sasuke face Zabuza's assistant Haku. In the battle, Sasuke sacrifices himself to save Naruto from Haku's deadly throwing needles. Now, watching his classmate fall, Naruto feels something terrible stir within him...

SAKURA サクラ

Smart and studious, Sakura is the brightest of Naruto's classmates, but she's constantly distracted by her crush on Sasuke. Her goal: to win Sasuke's heart!

NARUTO ナルト

When Naruto was born, a destructive fox spirit was imprisoned inside his body. Spurned by the older villagers, he's grown into an attention-seeking troublemaker. His goal: to become the village's next *Hokage*.

SASUKE サスケ

The top student in Naruto's class, Sasuke comes from the prestigious Uchiha clan. His goal: to get revenge on a mysterious person who wronged him in the past.



NARUTO

VOL. 4
THE NEXT LEVEL

CONTENTS



GOWN

28: NINE TAILS...!!

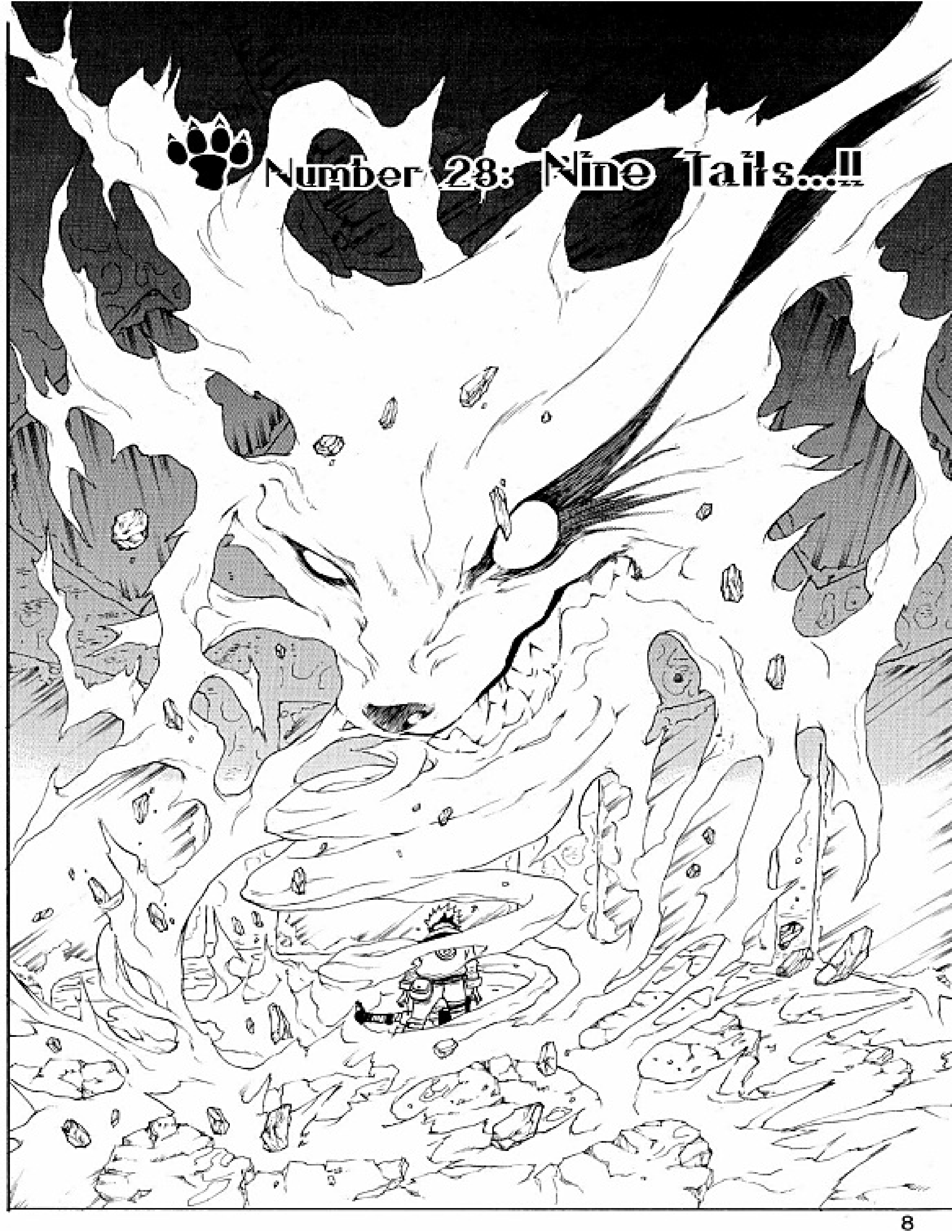
!

WH...WHAT CHAKRA IS THIS?!

ONG ONG ONG

SHFF

!!


Number 28: Nine Tails...!!

READ THIS WAY

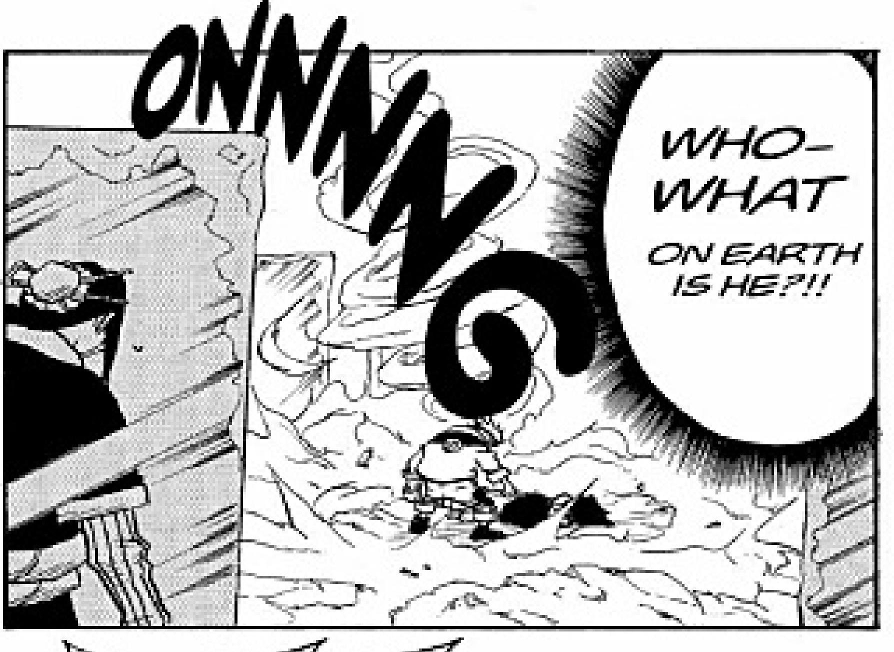












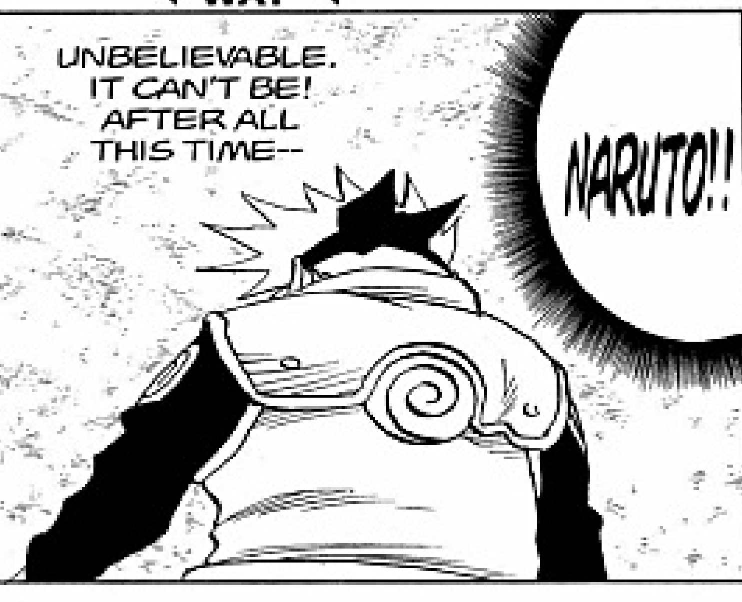



!!
!
...!!
IS THIS... ZABUZA'S DOING?!
!!
NO!
NO... THIS POWER - THIS ENERGY... IS... FOUL... IT'S EVIL AND... FAMILIAR... BUT IT CAN'T BE!

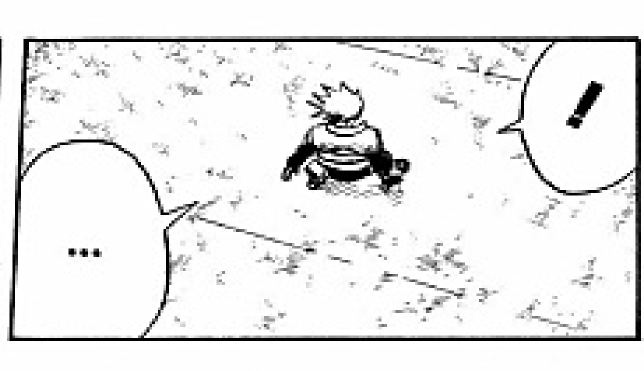

READ THIS WAY


THIS CHAKRA I'M FEELING. SOMETHING ABOUT IT... FILLS ME WITH DREAD!


KAKASHI...?!
NO... IT SEEMS BIGGER THAN KAKASHI, SOMEHOW. BUT WHO--?!


NARUTO!!
UNBELIEVABLE. IT CAN'T BE! AFTER ALL THIS TIME--


- HAS THE BINDING SPELL BEGUN TO UNRAVEL? IS THE SEAL BROKEN?


!
...

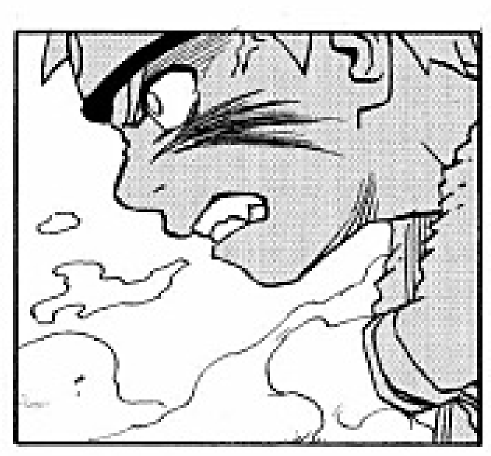

I SENSE THAT WE'RE SAFE - FOR NOW. IT HASN'T BROKEN THROUGH YET... NOT COMPLETELY.
BUT THE SEAL HAS SLIPPED A LITTLE, OR CRACKED. AND THE POWER OF THE NINE-TAILED DEMON FOX IS BLEEDING THROUGH.

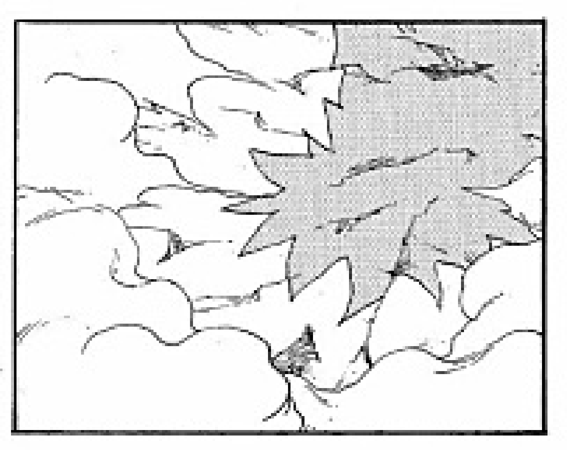

...I SENSE...


SPLAT
KLAT
SHLUK
FWUP FWP FWP
PLIT
ZOOOM
IF I ACT QUICKLY, THERE'S STILL A CHANCE --!
LISTEN TO ME... ZABUZA...
...I'M A BUSY MAN. YOU'RE A BUSY MAN. WE'VE BOTH GOT A LOT ON OUR PLATES...


READ THIS WAY
... AND IT GOES AGAINST THE GRAIN TO EVEN SUGGEST THIS...
...BUT WHAT DO YOU SAY WE STOP SCREWING AROUND...
FWUP FWP FWP FWP
POK
...AND WRAP THIS UP RIGHT NOW? ONE BIG MOVE, WINNER TAKE ALL?
BAMM
AN INTRIGUING NOTION...
WHAT'S LEFT, KAKASHI?
SHOW ME WHAT YOU'VE GOT!
GONGONGONG


GRRRR






HE'S ATTACKING!!!
TAK


FWOOSH!
HE'S SO BLOODTHIRSTY! HE'S COMPLETELY CHANGED FROM THE BOY OF JUST MINUTES AGO!
RAAAAH
POW!
HE... HE DEFLECTED THEM... WITHOUT EVEN TOUCHING THEM?!
!
GLARE
FWOOM

BOOOOM
TUMBLE
THUD
SKIIID
I'VE GOT TO MAKE IT TO THE NEXT MIRROR!
TAK


SHLUK!!
GRRRR
HE COULDN'T HAVE--!!

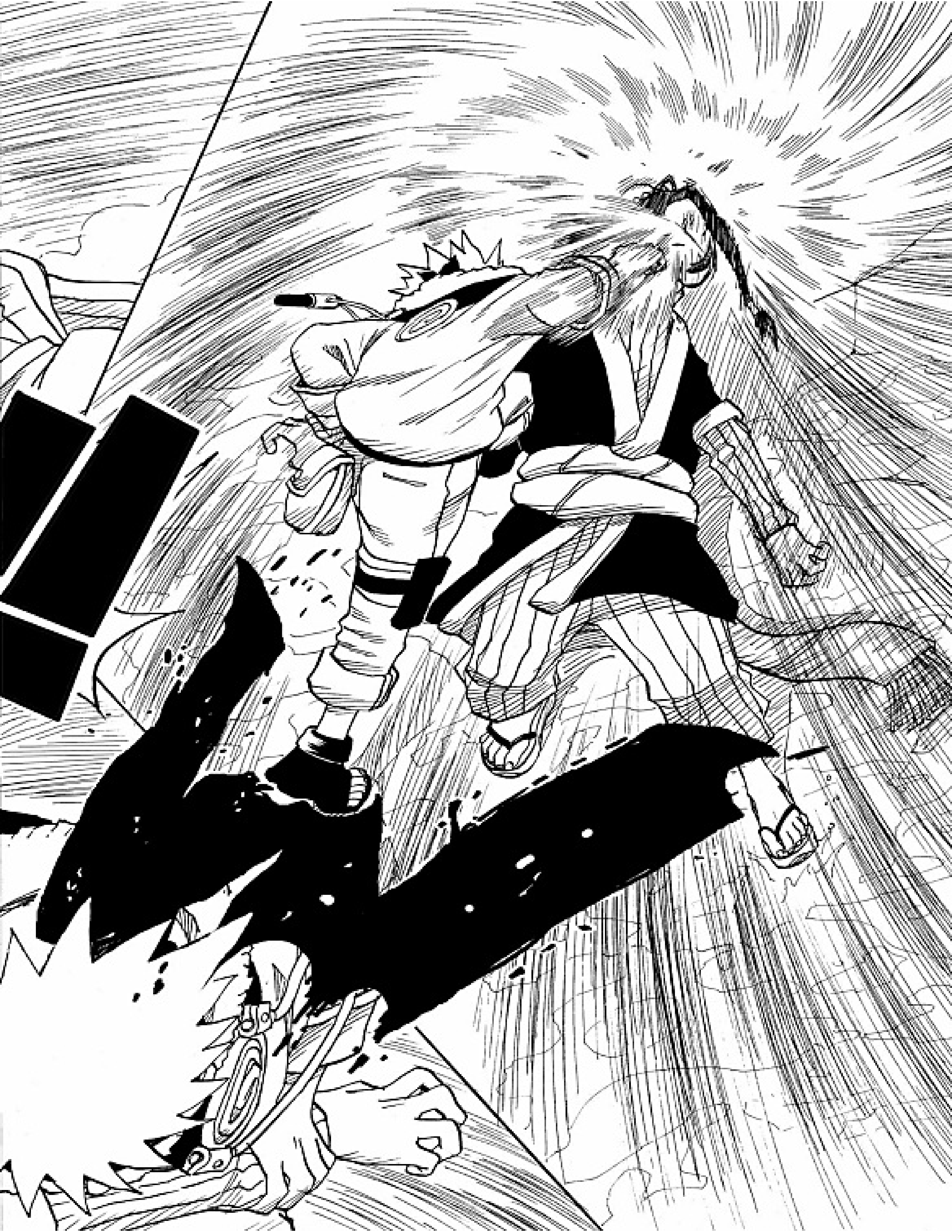
AAAUUURGH!!

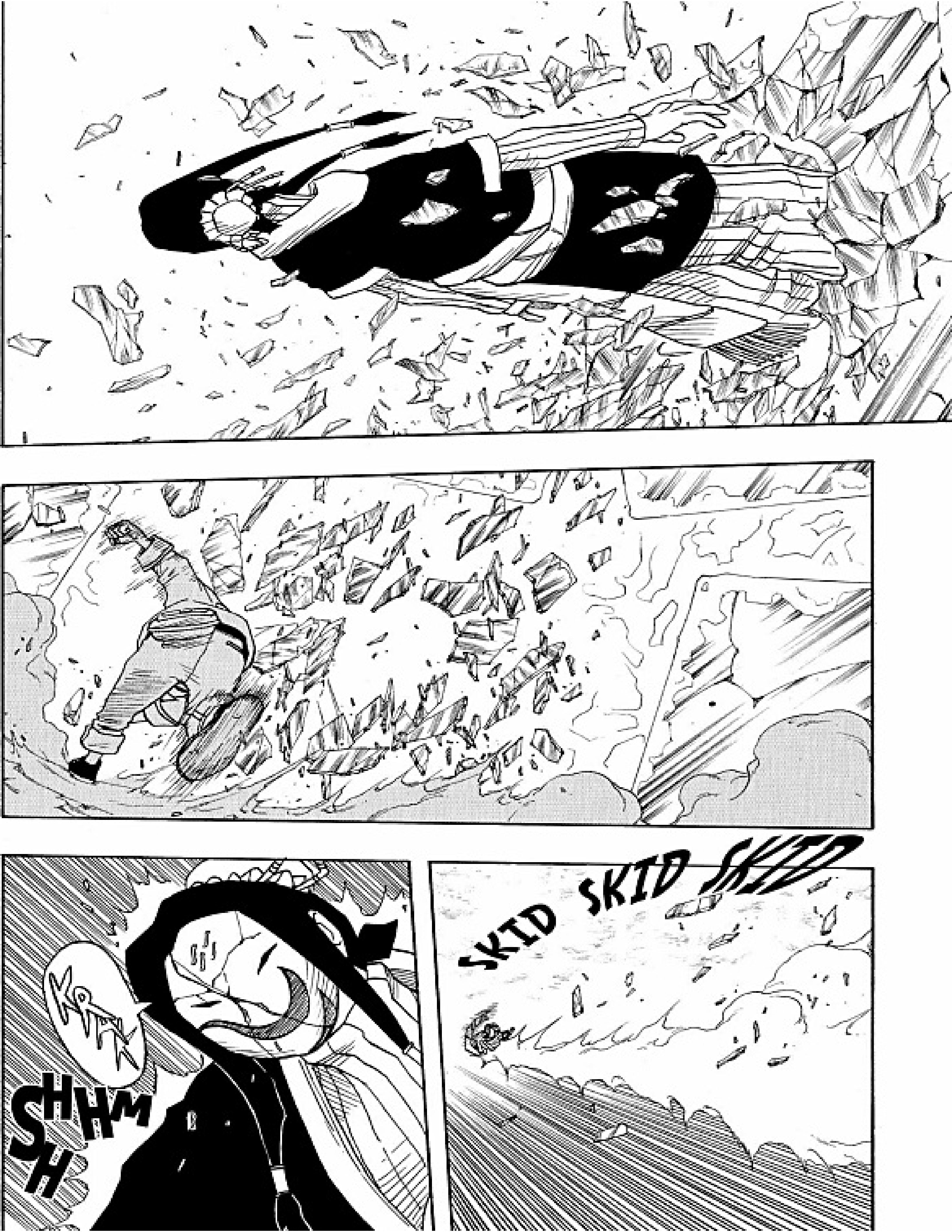
ONGONGONG



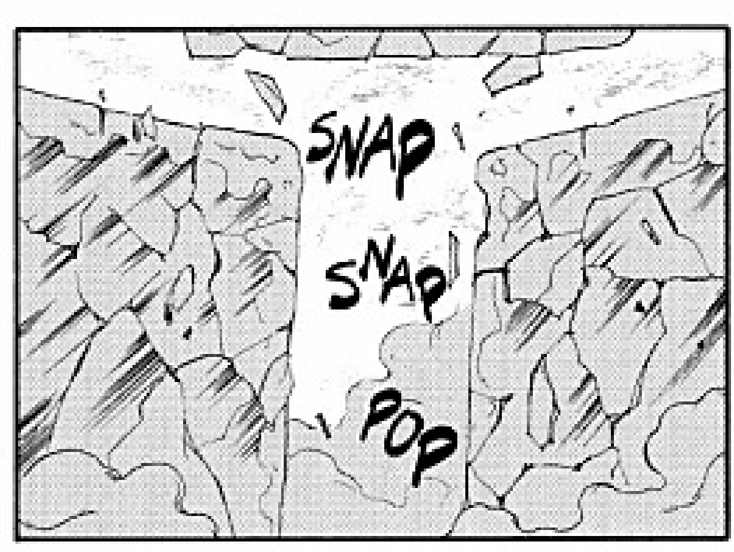

THIS IS BAD!!!
I CAN'T WITHSTAND HIS CHAKRA ANY MORE!!!
PLIT
PLIT
!
PLIT
UHN...
KRUNCH
OW...
!!
HEH





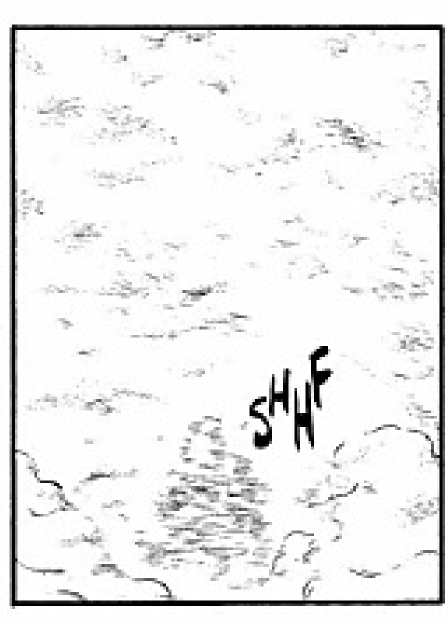

SKID SKID SKID
SHHM SH


READ
THIS
WAY


SNAP
SNAP
POP


SNAP
POP
PING

PING
PING


SHHF

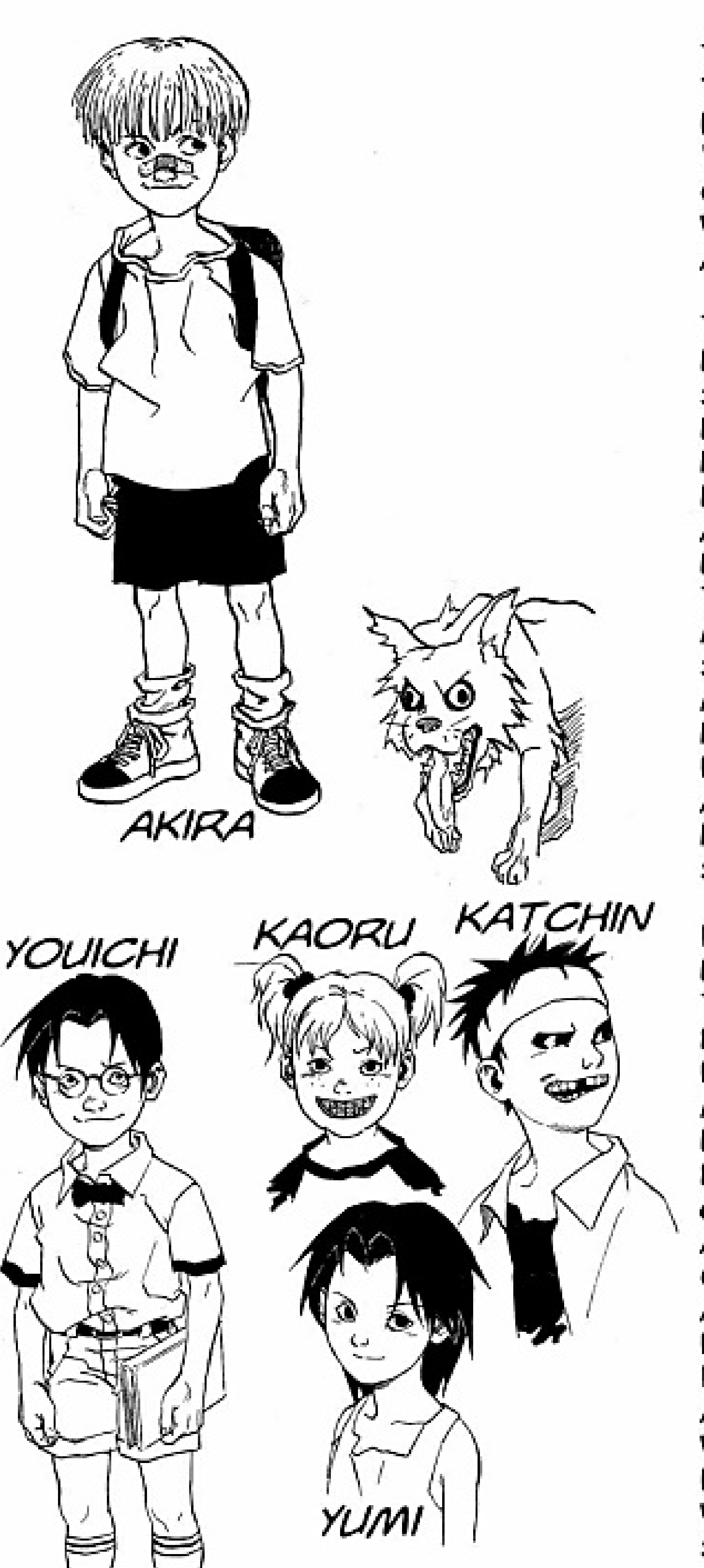

...MASTER ZABUZA...
PING


!!


...I...
...AM FINISHED.
TAK


MASTER ZABUZA...
PING

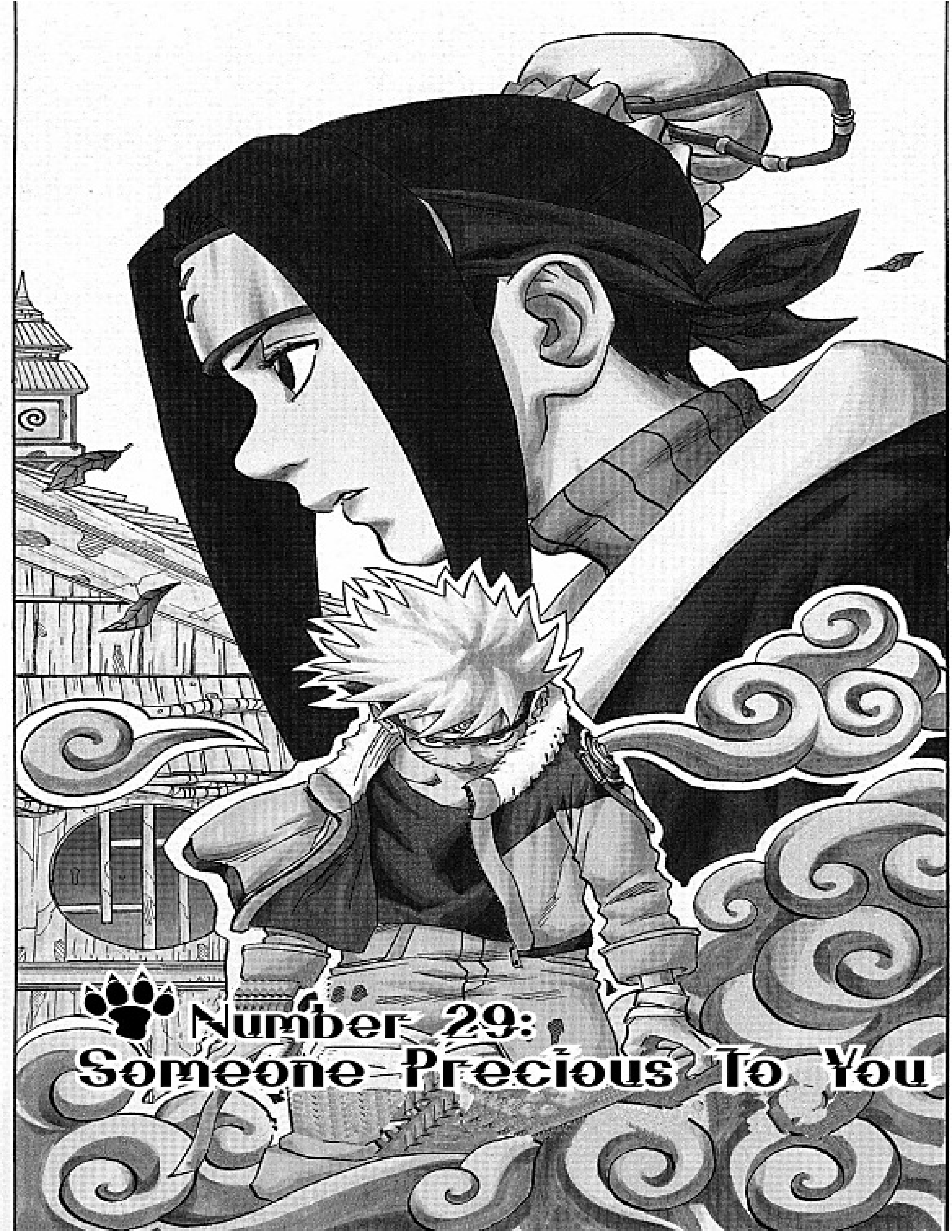
KISHIMOTO MASASHI'S FIRST MANGA REJECT SPECIAL!



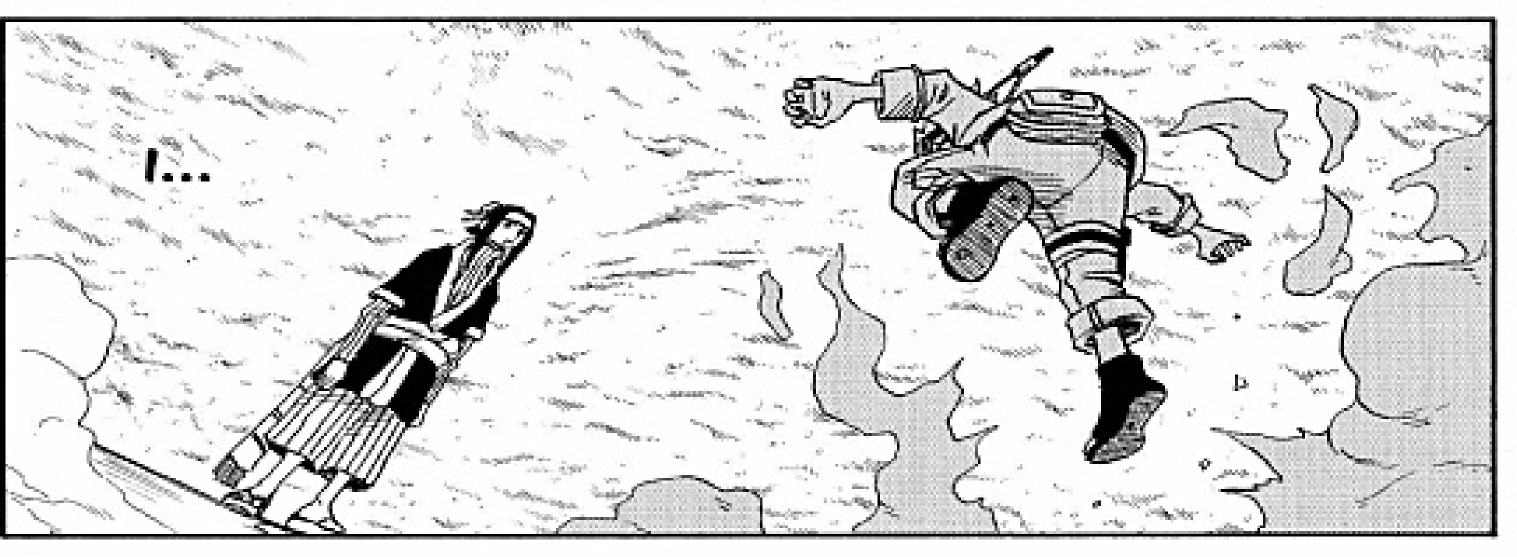
THE CHARACTER DESIGNS TO THE LEFT ARE FROM A FAILED PROJECT OF MINE CALLED "WANDERING DETOUR" THAT I CAME UP WITH RIGHT AFTER I WON THE HOP-STEP STAR AWARD.

THE STORY IS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KID NAMED AKIRA AND HIS FRIENDS KATCHIN AND KAORU FIND A WALLET ON THE WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL, AND OF ALL OF THE TROUBLE THAT ENSUES WHEN THE THREE OF THEM DECIDE TO KEEP THE MONEY THAT THEY FIND AND SPEND IT ON THEMSELVES. MAYBE IT WAS TOO HARD TO FOLLOW, OR SIMPLY TOO DOWN-TO-EARTH FOR A BOYS' ADVENTURE MAGAZINE... BUT FOR WHATEVER REASON, IT WAS SUMMARILY REJECTED.

IT WAS MY FIRST REJECTION EVER. BUT I WAS SUCH A KID BACK THEN, EVEN GETTING MY FIRST REJECTION SEEMED LIKE A BIG DEAL, ANOTHER PROFESSIONAL MILESTONE I'D PASSED. FOR THE LONGEST TIME, I'D BEEN READING OTHER MANGA CARTOONISTS' TALES OF WOE ABOUT THE REJECTIONS THEY'D GOTTEN, AND I'D BEEN FEELING A LITTLE LEFT OUT. WITH "WANDERING DETOUR," I WAS FINALLY IN THE CLUB! I EVEN BRAGGED ABOUT IT A LITTLE. LIKE I SAID, I WAS A KID THEN. NOW, I'M A TRUE PROFESSIONAL, AND I AGREE WITH MY FRIENDS: "REJECTION SUCKS!" (LAUGHTER)


Number 29:
Someone Precious To You

MASTER ZABUZA...

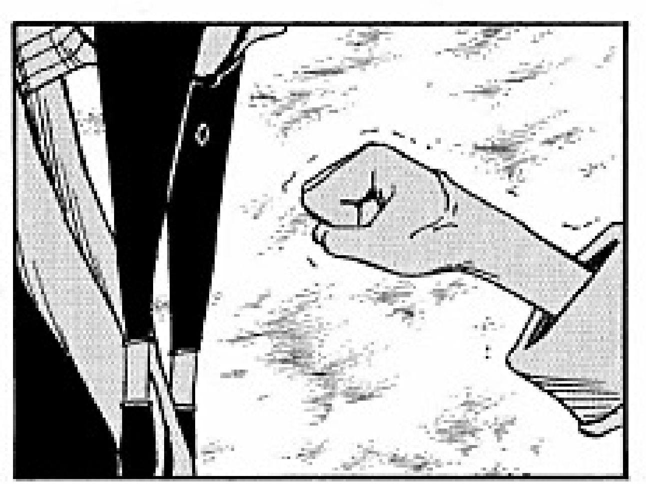






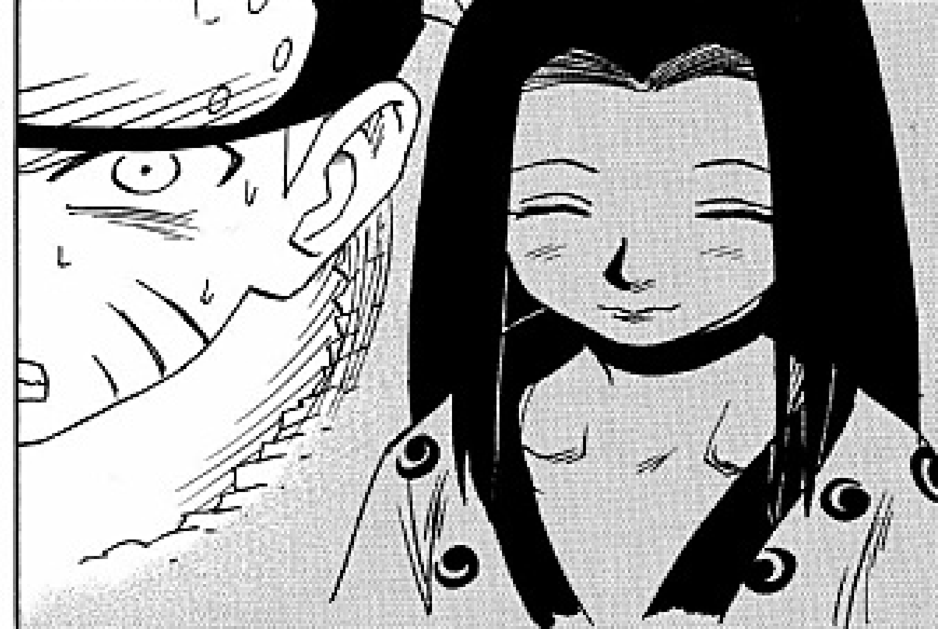

WOOOOM
SHIIING
SKF
SKF


Y-YOU'RE... THE KID I MET THIS MORNING...!!
...





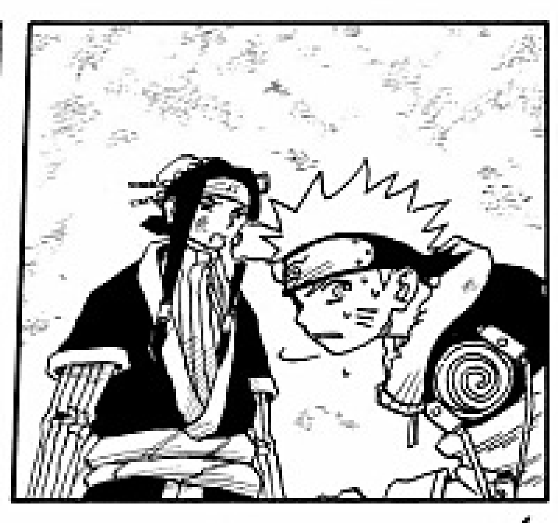

WHY DID YOU STOP?
...

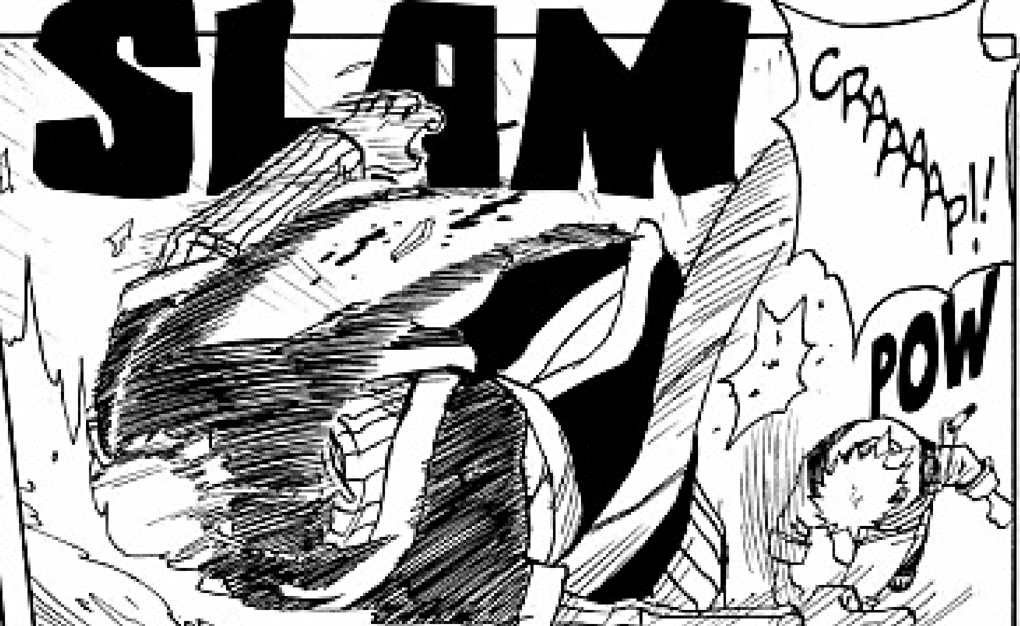


I MURDERED YOUR COMRADE... YOUR BELOVED FRIEND...

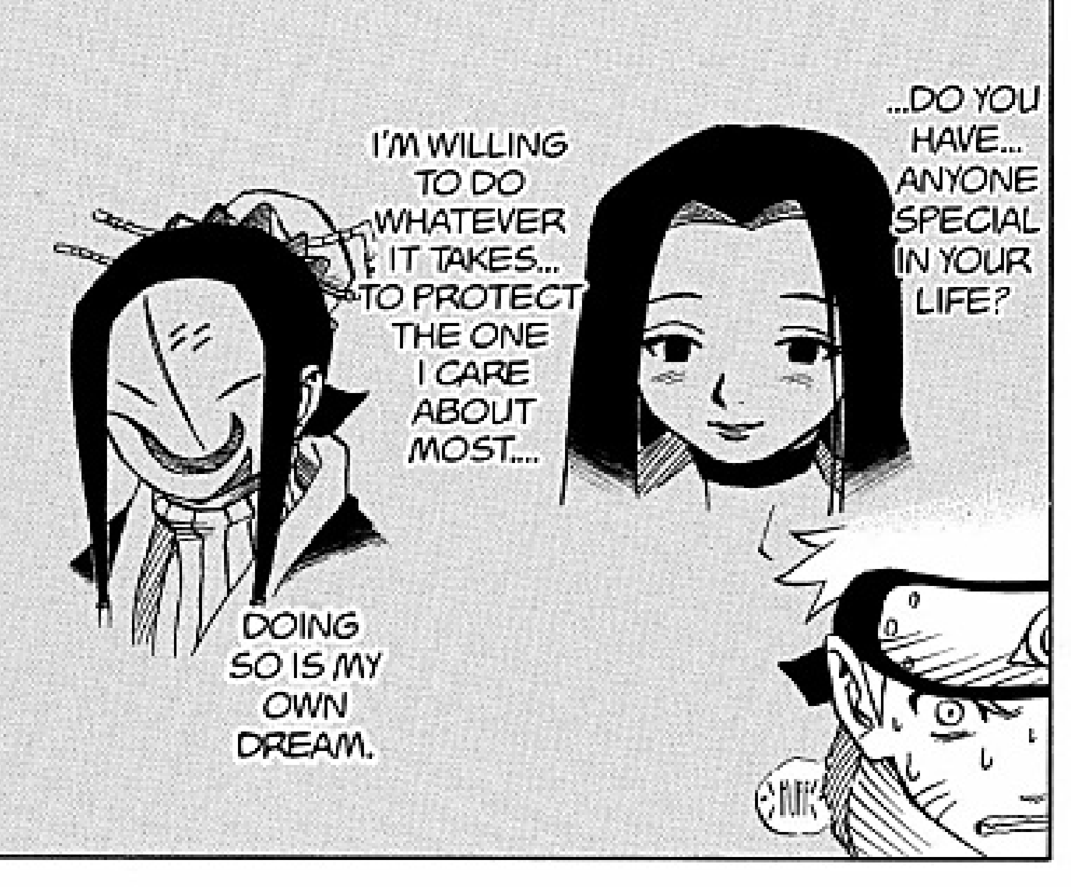
... AND YOU STILL SPARE ME?!





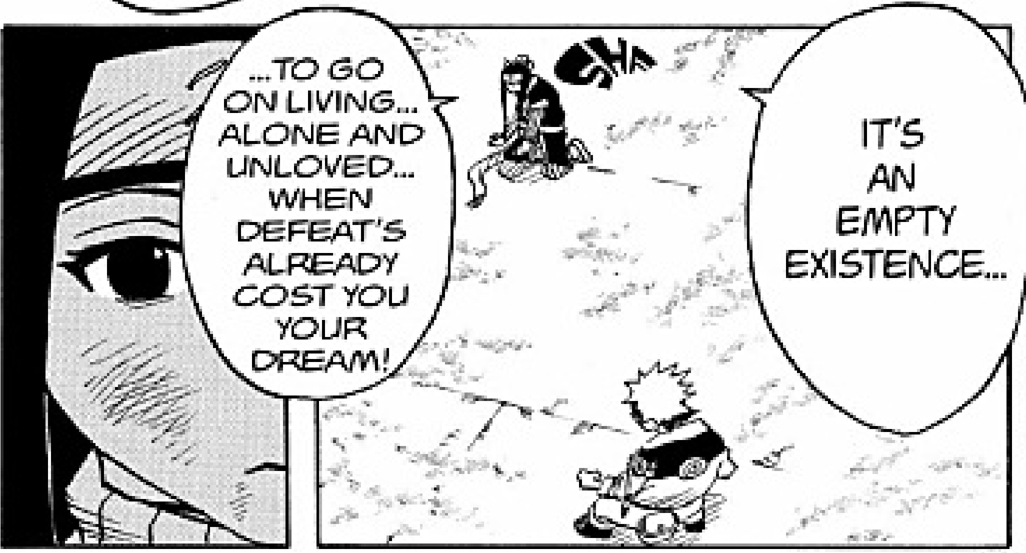




ALL THE POWER YOU HAD BEFORE... WHERE IS IT? YOU CAN'T HOPE TO KILL ME WITH THE MEAGER FORCE YOU PUT INTO THAT BLOW.
!


...DO YOU HAVE... ANYONE SPECIAL IN YOUR LIFE?
I'M WILLING TO DO WHATEVER IT TAKES... TO PROTECT THE ONE I CARE ABOUT MOST...
DOING SO IS MY OWN DREAM.


OFTEN PEOPLE HAVE IT WRONG, MISTAKENLY BELIEVING...
... THAT SHOWING MERCY TO AN ENEMY IS KINDNESS.
THEY SPARE THE FOE WHOSE LIFE IS IN THEIR HANDS...

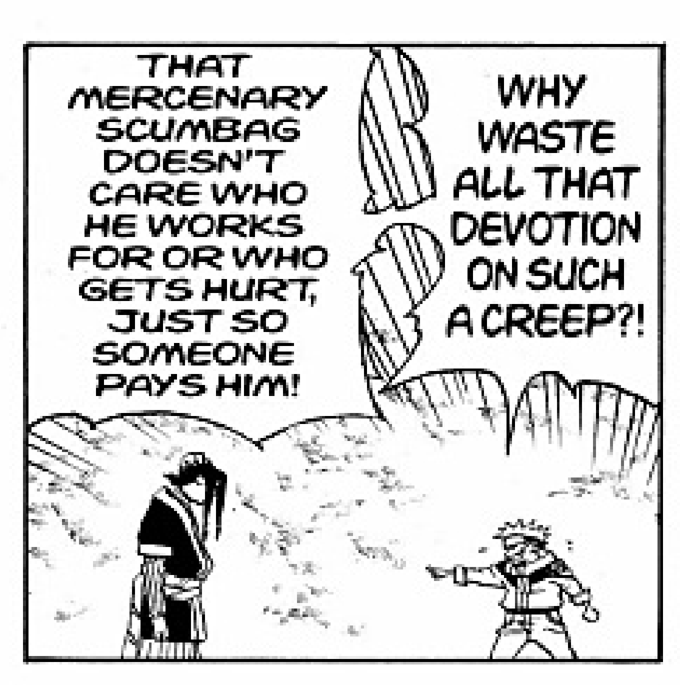

BUT DON'T YOU SEE?


IT'S AN EMPTY EXISTENCE...
...TO GO ON LIVING... ALONE AND UNLOVED... WHEN DEFEAT'S ALREADY COST YOU YOUR DREAM!
SHA




MASTER ZABUZA HAS NO USE FOR A WEAK SHINOBI.
YOU'VE TAKEN AWAY MY REASON FOR LIVING!
HEH


SAY WHAT--?!


WHY WASTE ALL THAT DEVOTION ON SUCH A CREEP?!
THAT MERCENARY SCUMBAG DOESN'T CARE WHO HE WORKS FOR OR WHO GETS HURT, JUST SO SOMEONE PAYS HIM!


!!
WHEN PEOPLE ARE PROTECTING SOMETHING TRULY PRECIOUS TO THEM, THEY TRULY CAN BECOME... AS STRONG AS THEY MUST BE!
WHY...


IS THAT BROWLESS WONDER REALLY PRECIOUS TO YOU - YOUR "BELOVED FRIEND?!!!"


...


...
ONCE... I WAS PRECIOUS. I BELONGED... TO...
!
MY...
...
...PARENTS.
!
...
I WAS BORN IN A SNOWY, LITTLE VILLAGE IN THE LAND OF MIST.
AND I WAS HAPPY... MY PARENTS WERE GOOD, KIND PEOPLE.


JUST AS I WAS GETTING OLD ENOUGH TO REALLY NOTICE THE WORLD AROUND ME...
...SOMETHING HAPPENED.


BUT...

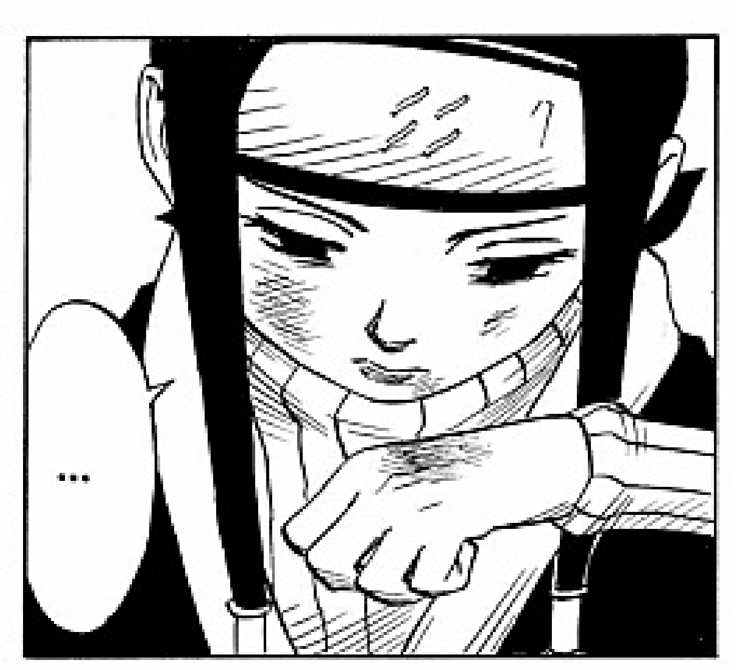



..BLOOD..?!


...
BLOOD. MY BLOOD.

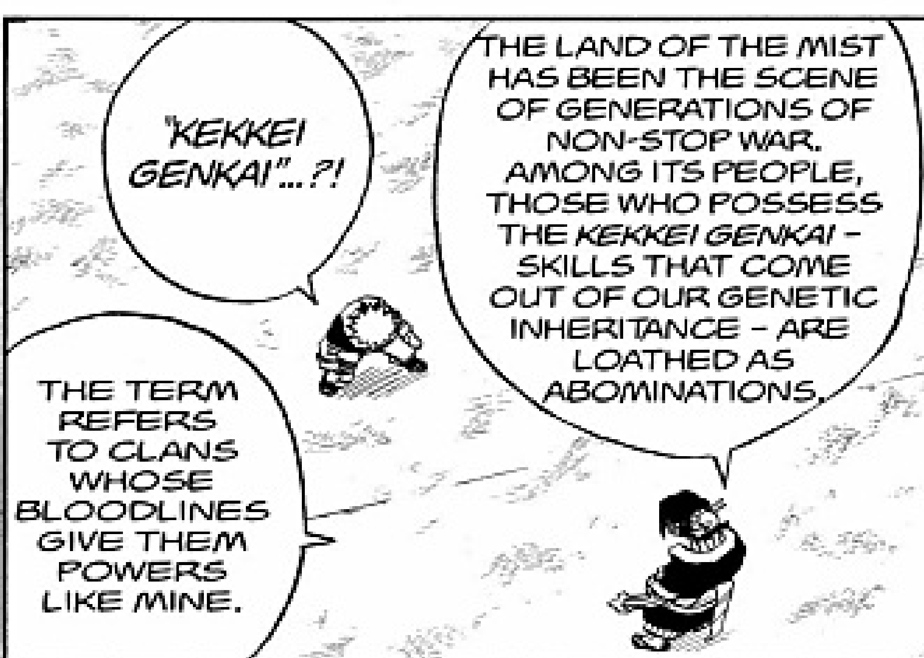

...LIKE WHAT...?
WHAT HAPPENED?

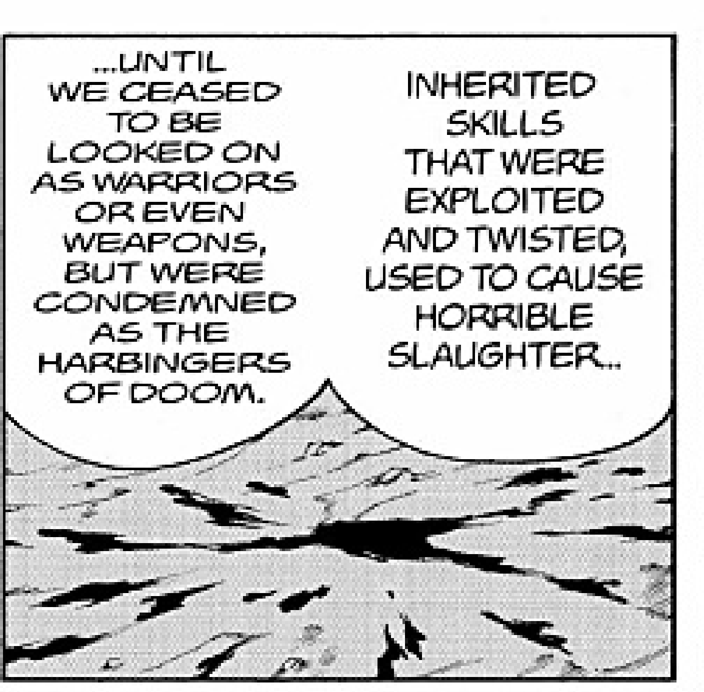

SO...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

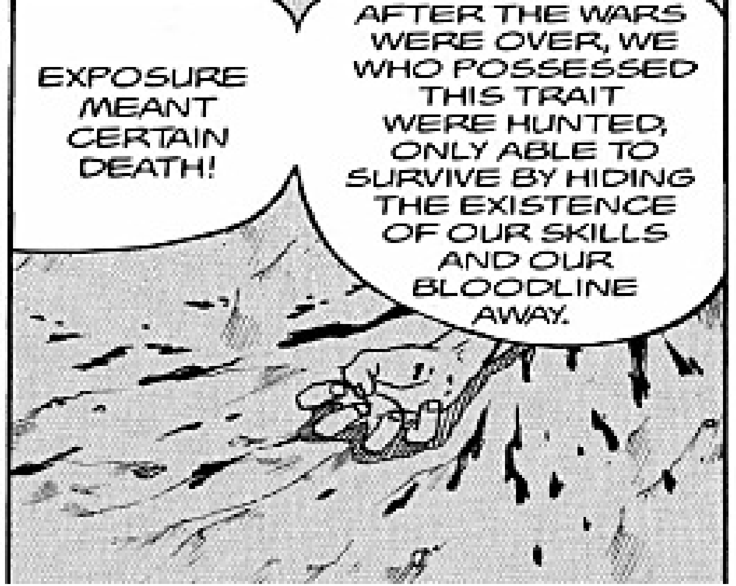

...


MY FATHER KILLED MY MOTHER...
...AND TRIED TO KILL ME.

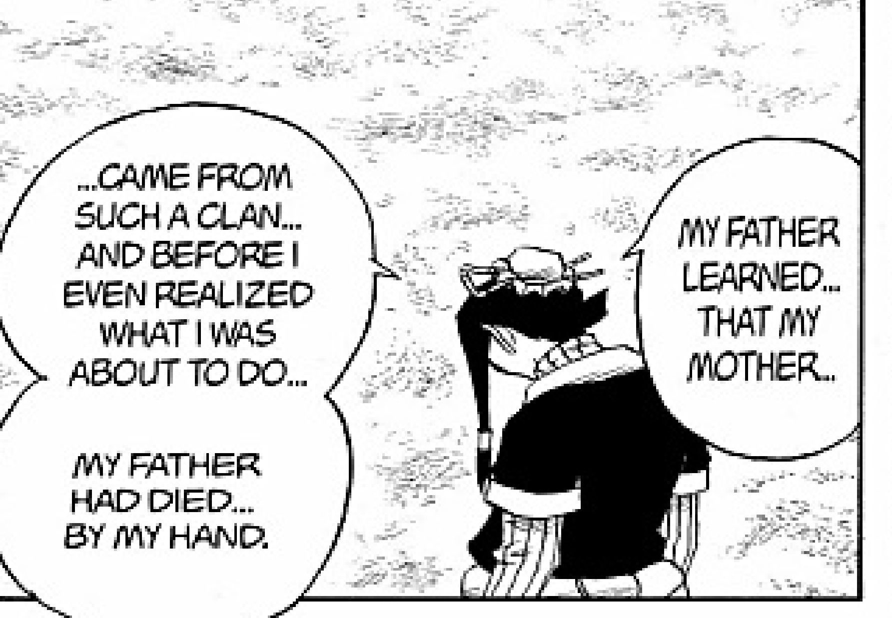

WHY--?


THE LAND OF THE MIST HAS BEEN THE SCENE OF GENERATIONS OF NON-STOP WAR. AMONG ITS PEOPLE, THOSE WHO POSSESS THE *KEKKEI GENKAI* – SKILLS THAT COME OUT OF OUR GENETIC INHERITANCE – ARE LOATHED AS ABOMINATIONS.
"KEKKEI GENKAI"...?!
THE TERM REFERS TO CLANS WHOSE BLOODLINES GIVE THEM POWERS LIKE MINE.


INHERITED SKILLS THAT WERE EXPLOITED AND TWISTED, USED TO CAUSE HORRIBLE SLAUGHTER...
...UNTIL WE CEASED TO BE LOOKED ON AS WARRIORS OR EVEN WEAPONS, BUT WERE CONDEMNED AS THE HARBINGERS OF DOOM.

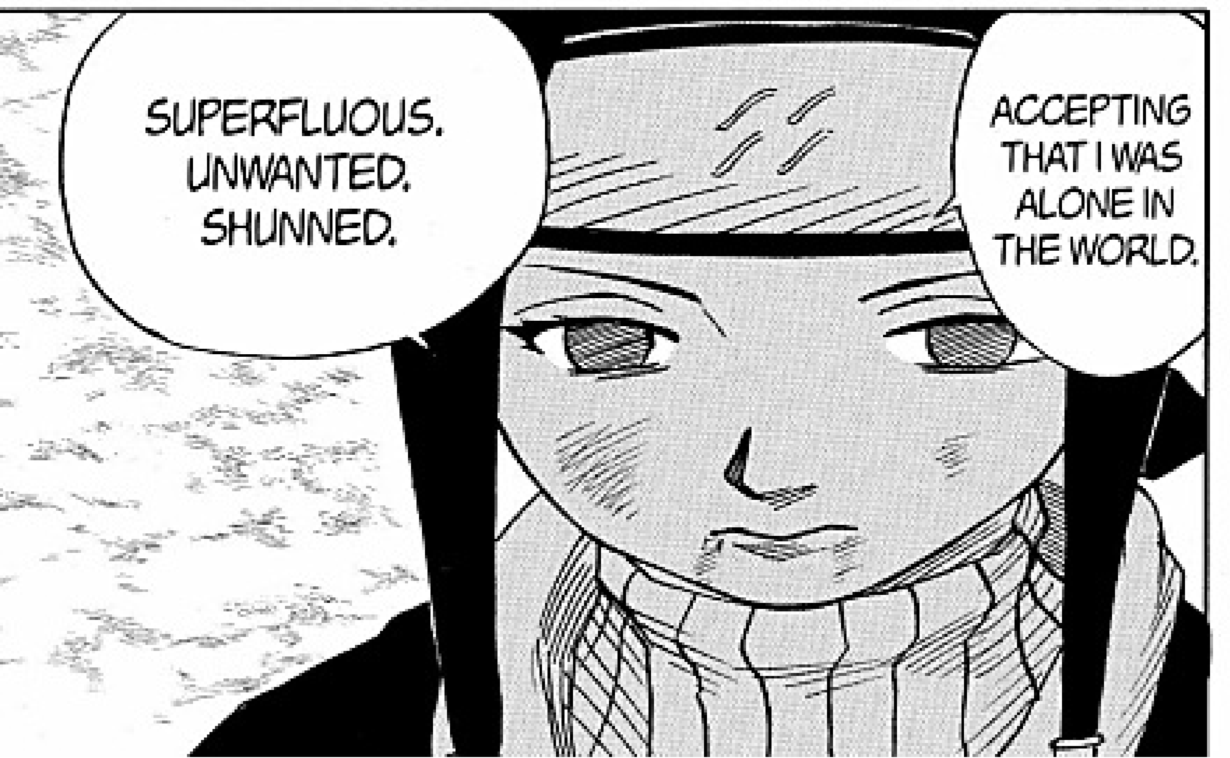

AFTER THE WARS WERE OVER, WE WHO POSSESSED THIS TRAIT WERE HUNTED, ONLY ABLE TO SURVIVE BY HIDING THE EXISTENCE OF OUR SKILLS AND OUR BLOODLINE AWAY.
EXPOSURE MEANT CERTAIN DEATH!


I'M SURE THE BOY I KILLED, WHO SHARED THAT SKILL, MUST ALSO HAVE GROWN UP KNOWING THE PAIN OF WHICH I SPEAK.
WE ARE SPECIAL. WE ARE POWERFUL. AND WE ARE FEARED.



MY FATHER LEARNED... THAT MY MOTHER..
...CAME FROM SUCH A CLAN... AND BEFORE I EVEN REALIZED WHAT I WAS ABOUT TO DO...
MY FATHER HAD DIED... BY MY HAND.

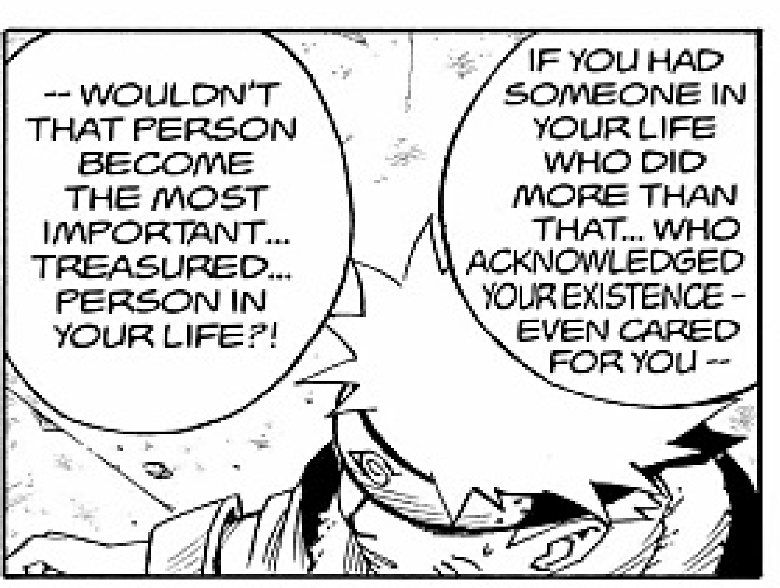

AND THEN IT CAME TO ME.
I KNEW WHAT I WAS.

...
AND I WAS FORCED TO ACCEPT IT.
THAT WAS THE MOST PAINFUL THING...

THE MOST PAINFUL THING...?

ACCEPTING THAT I WAS ALONE IN THE WORLD.
SUPERFLUOUS. UNWANTED. SHUNNED.

HE... SOUNDS... THE WAY I FEEL!
!!







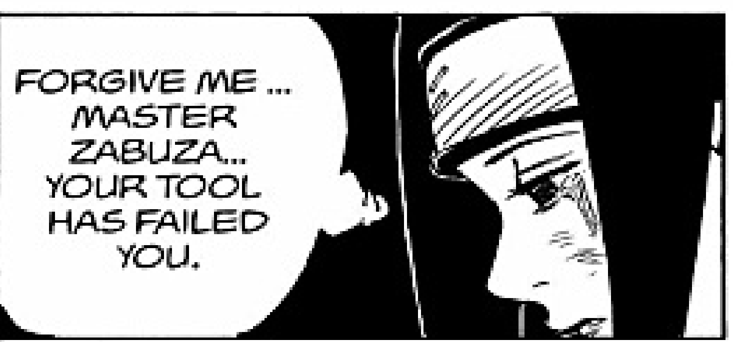




FROM THIS DAY ON, YOU BELONG TO ME, BODY, SOUL... AND BLOOD!
COME!
!!
I WAS SO HAPPY...!!
I HAVE BAD NEWS FOR YOU, HAKU... I'M LEAVING THIS LAND TONIGHT!
BUT...! I'VE SWORN AN OATH TO RETURN ONE DAY... AS A CONQUERER, WHO'LL CRUSH THEM ALL BENEATH MY FEET!
AND TO DO THAT, WHAT I NEED FROM YOU IS NEITHER LOVE NOR AFFECTION AND SUPPORT. WHAT I REQUIRE IS--!
I UNDER-STAND.

I AM YOUR WEAPON AND YOUR TOOL.
KEEP ME BESIDE YOU, AND I'LL STRIKE WHERE YOU TELL ME TO STRIKE, KILL WHOM YOU TELL ME TO KILL.


HEH...
GOOD BOY.


FORGIVE ME ... MASTER ZABUZA... YOUR TOOL HAS FAILED YOU.


NARUTO...
PLEASE...


!


TAKE MY LIFE.



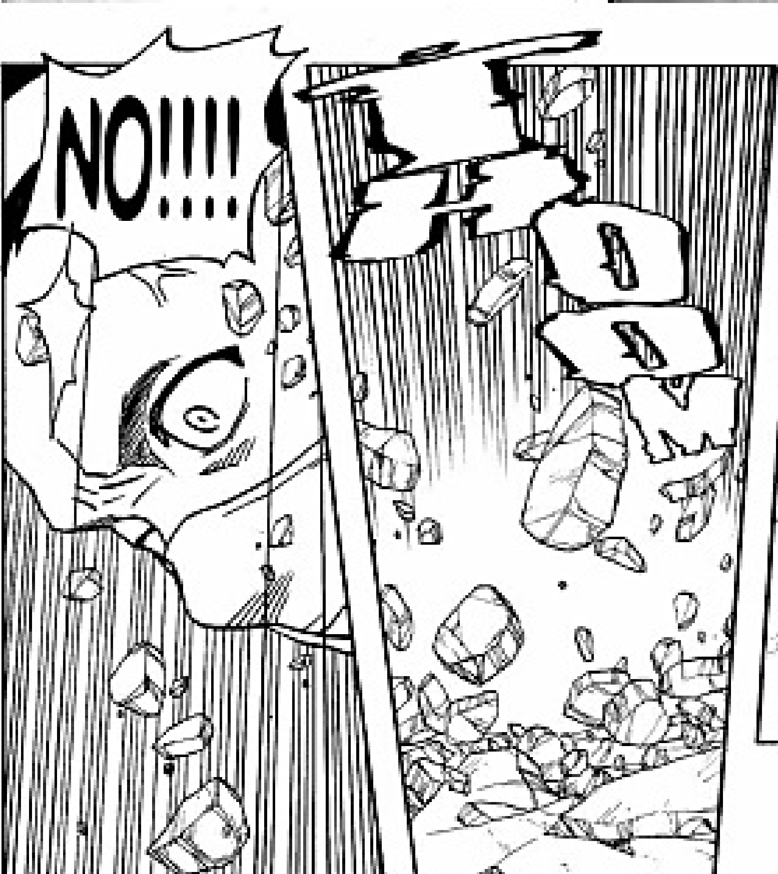
SWIP
SWIP
SWIP
SWIP
OMG
EARTH STYLE! FANGED VENGEANCE TECHNIQUE!
SHINOBI CONJURATION!

YOU CAN'T EVEN TELL WHERE I TRULY AM!!!

THIS POSTURING WILL GET YOU NOWHERE, KAKASHI!










WSH
SNAP
SNARF
KRAK
!!!
GRAB
WH-WHAT ARE WE HEARING?
!
WHEN YOUR EYES AND YOUR EARS HAVE LET YOU DOWN --
-- YOU CAN ALWAYS FOLLOW YOUR NOSE!

OMG

UHN...



THIS CONJURATION IS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR TRACKING.
IT WORKED BECAUSE YOU SHUT YOUR EYES IN THE MIST.


IT'S WHY I WENT OUT OF MY WAY TO BLEED A BIT DURING BOTH OF OUR EARLIER ENCOUNTERS.
...MY LITTLE NINJA PUPS COULDN'T MISS IT!
UHN...
THE SMELL OF MY BLOOD IS ALL OVER YOU AND YOUR WEAPONS, SO THICK...
EVERY DOG HAS HIS NOSE... AND THEY ALL KNOW YOU STINK.
SO... WHO'S ENMESHED IN WHOSE SPELL NOW?
UGH...
THE FOG IS LIFTING. I CAN SEE YOUR FUTURE...
YOUR FUTURE IS DEATH.



THE DESIGN TO THE LEFT IS FROM ANOTHER FLOP – A MANGA CALLED "ASIAN PUNK", THAT WAS RESOUNDINGLY REJECTED AT EVERY TURN. TO BE FRANK, THE PREMISE WAS—NOT COINCIDENTALLY—KINDA LIKE "GHOSTBUSTERS."

THE MAIN CHARACTER WAS A KID WITH AN AXE TAKING ON AN EVIL FENG-SHUI MASTER WHO COULD SUMMON AND CONTROL EVIL SPIRITS... AND THE MAIN CHARACTER WASN'T REALLY HUMAN HIMSELF, BUT HAD BEEN CREATED BY SOME GREATER POWER. THERE WAS MORE, BUT WE DON'T NEED TO GO INTO IT HERE.

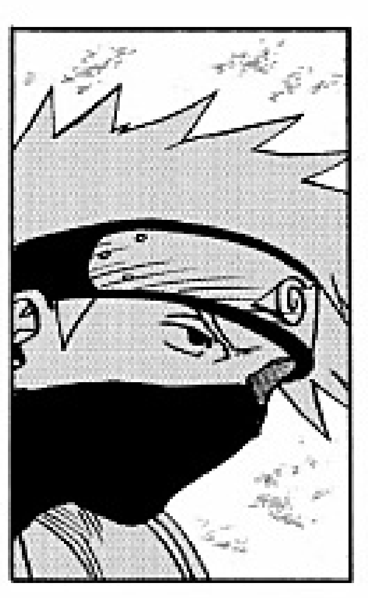
THE THING IS, WITH THAT STORY, MY PRIZE-WINNING SERIES KARAKUR, AND NARUTO, IT OCCURS ME TO ME THAT MY HEROES ARE ALWAYS THESE YOUNG GUYS. I GUESS I'M JUST A SUCKER FOR BOYS' ADVENTURE TALES!


Number 30: Your Future is...!!


YOU SAY MY FUTURE IS DEATH...?
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR BLUFFS.


WHO'S BLUFFING NOW?
THERE'S NO WAY OUT. FACE IT.
YOU'RE GOING TO DIE.






ZABUZA...
YOU'VE HAD YOUR FUN.

WE KNOW ALL ABOUT THE FAILED COUP YOU AND YOUR FOLLOWERS STAGED, AND ABOUT THE ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE MIZUKAGE, THE WATER SHADOW, LEADER OF YOUR PEOPLE.

THE DAY YOU DESERTED THE LAND OF THE MIST AND BECAME A TURNCOAT AND RENEGADE, YOUR NAME AND YOUR ACTIONS WERE REPORTED TO US AT KONOHA VILLAGE.

YOU SCHEMED YOUR SCHEMES...

...

YOU'VE BEEN TRYING TO RAISE FUNDS FOR A SECOND ATTEMPT, AND BARELY STAYING A JUMP AHEAD OF THE SHINOBI HUNTERS... WHICH IS WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE.

IT'S WHY YOU'D STOOP TO WORK FOR A PARASITE LIKE GATō.



LIGHTNING BLADE!

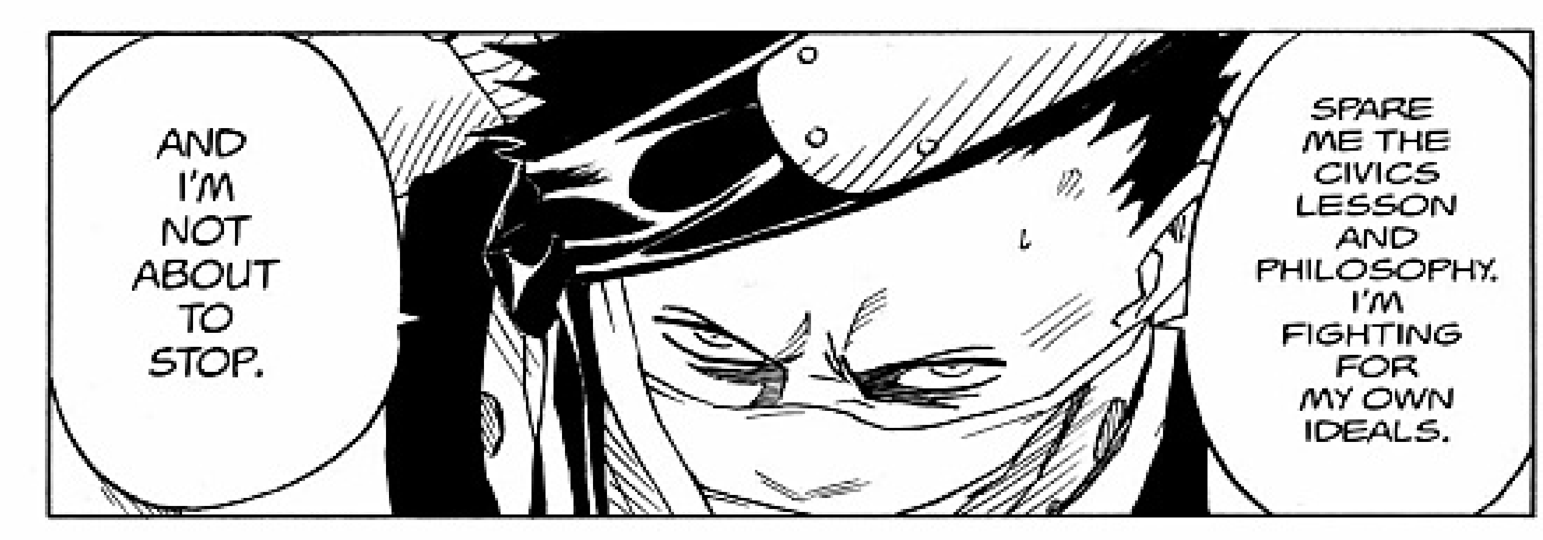






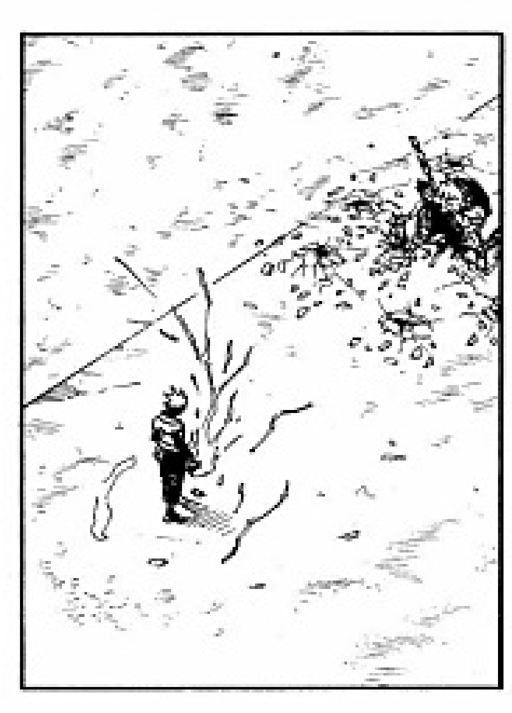

THAT'S NOT WHAT A TRUE SHINOBI DOES.


YOU'RE WILLING TO SACRIFICE THIS PLACE AND EVERYONE IN IT, JUST TO ADVANCE YOUR OWN AMBITIONS.


SPARE ME THE CIVICS LESSON AND PHILOSOPHY. I'M FIGHTING FOR MY OWN IDEALS.
AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO STOP.


HUH?!
GIVE UP...


I'LL SAY THIS JUST ONCE MORE.



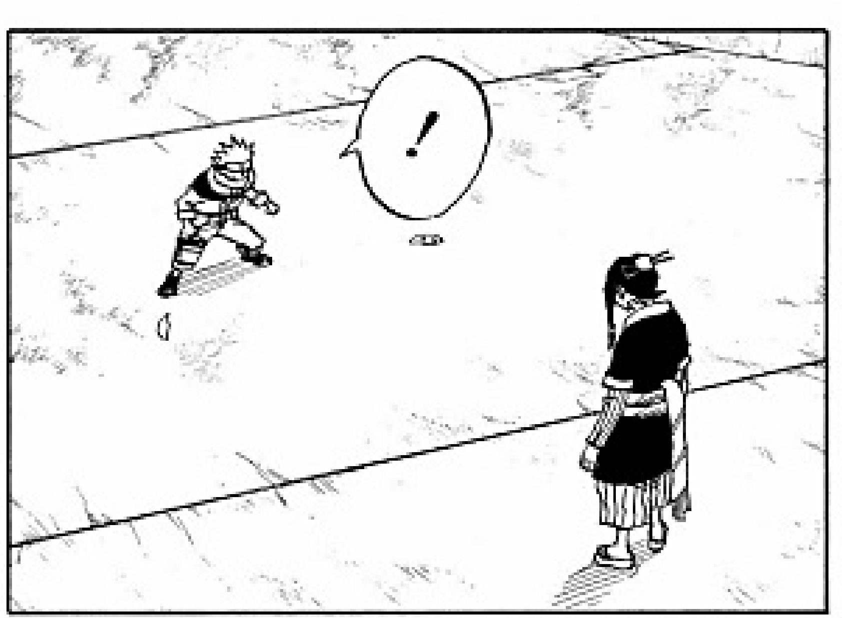
YOUR FUTURE IS DEATH.





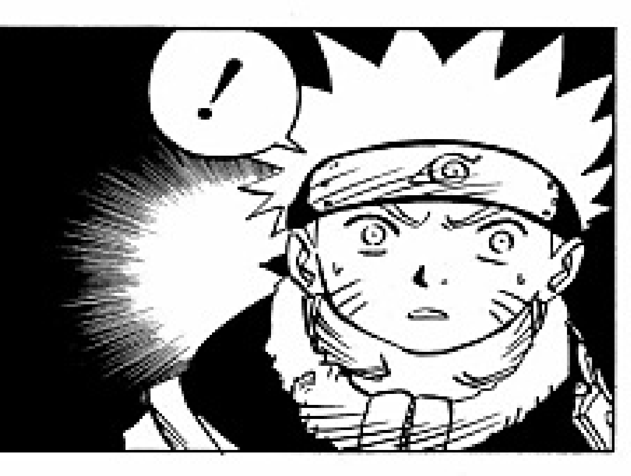




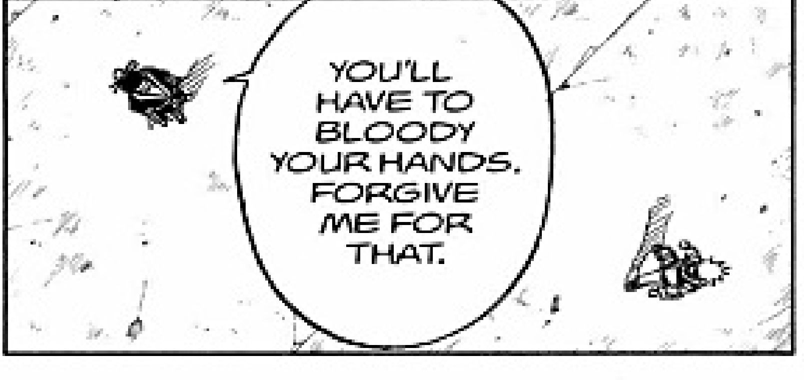



WHAT IS WITH YOU? YOU'RE USED TO BEING THE TOUGHEST. YOU DON'T LIKE TO LOSE. I GET THAT!
BUT WANTING TO DIE JUST 'CAUSE SOMEONE BEAT YOU IS CRAZY!!

THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN JUST FIGHTING. THERE'S MORE TO YOU!
YOUR BOSS MUST LIKE YOU FOR MORE THAN JUST THAT... RIGHT? DOESN'T HE?

...

!

...
THAT DAY I MET YOU IN THE FOREST... I REMEMBER THINKING THAT WE WERE TWO OF A KIND...
SURELY YOU CAN UNDER-STAND...

IS THAT...
IS THAT THE ONLY WAY? NO OTHER OUTCOME?

YOU'LL HAVE TO BLOODY YOUR HANDS. FORGIVE ME FOR THAT.

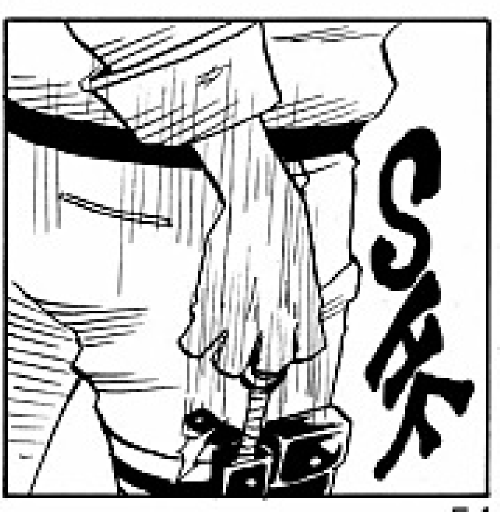
YES...!!



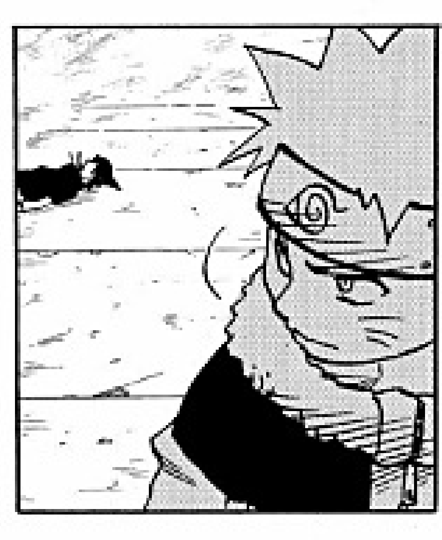






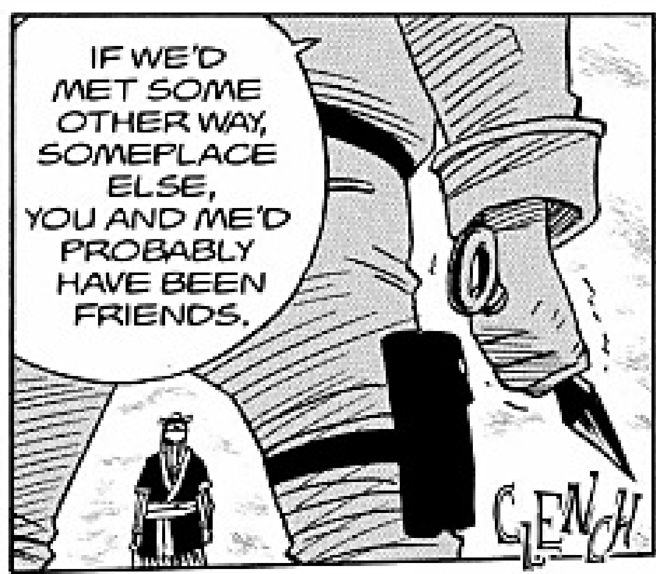


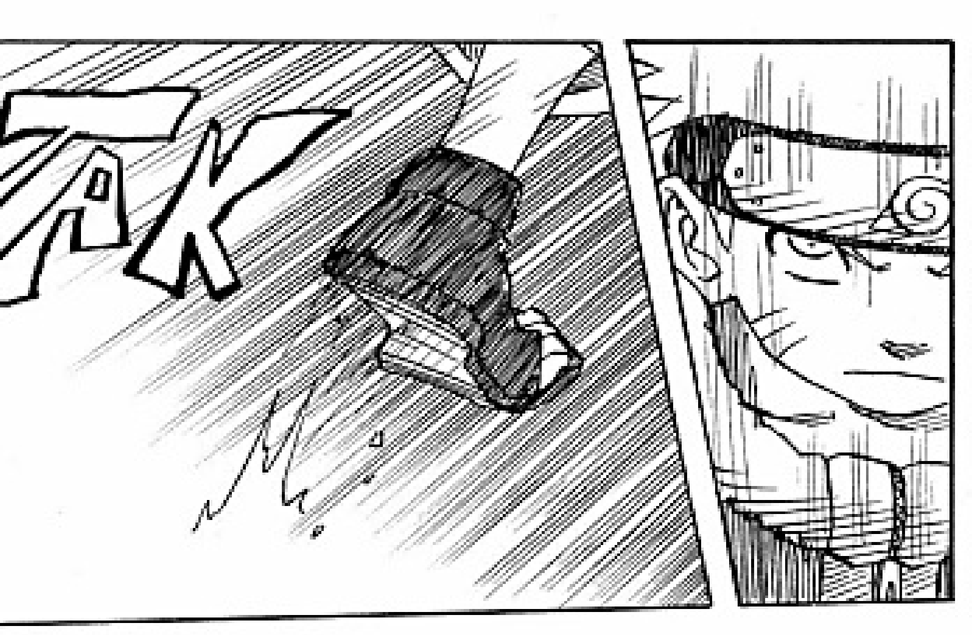






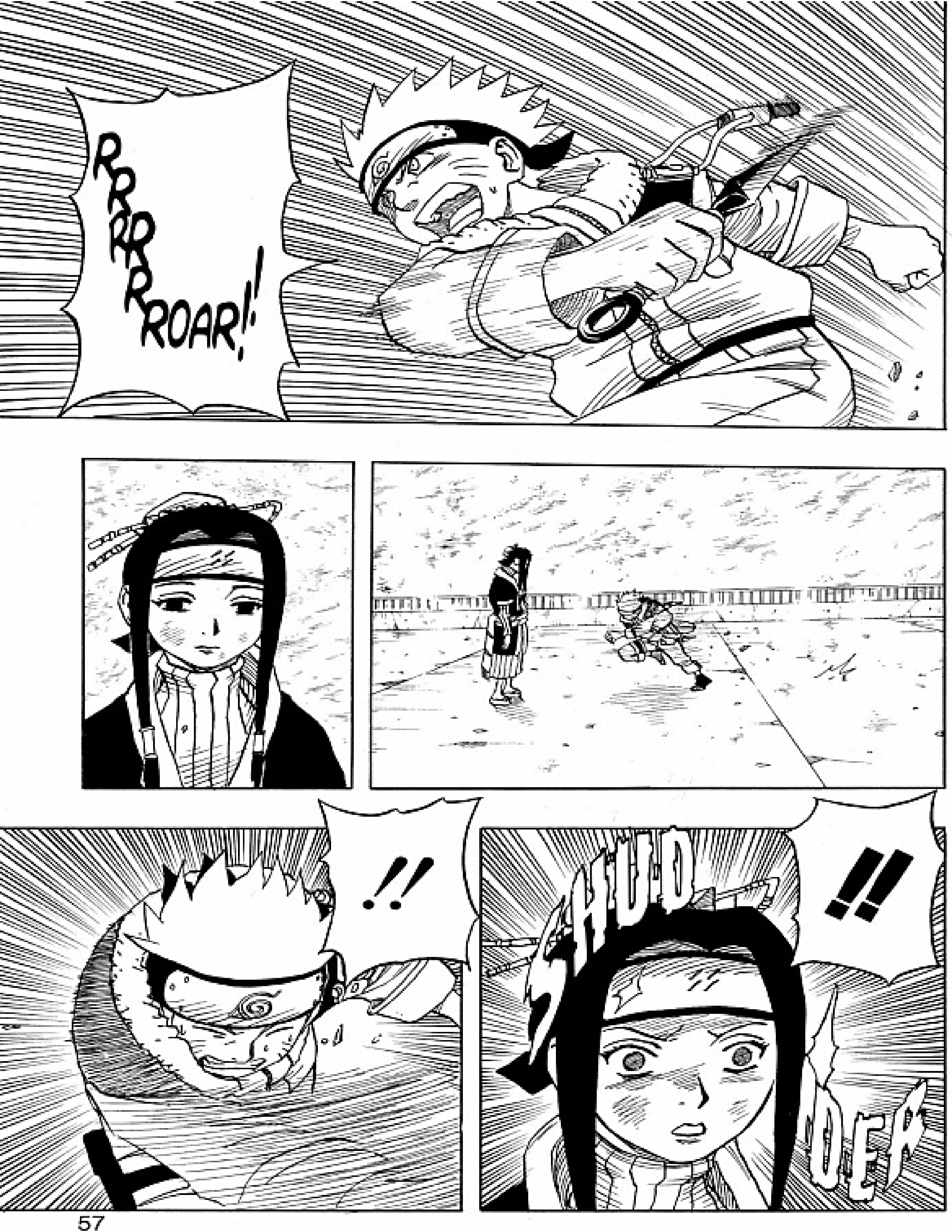

...HE...
...SASUKE HAD A DREAM, TOO...


IF WE'D MET SOME OTHER WAY, SOMEPLACE ELSE, YOU AND ME'D PROBABLY HAVE BEEN FRIENDS.
CLENCH




THANK YOU.
YOU'RE GOING TO BE VERY STRONG.


THAT SUPER-THICK MIST... IT'S STARTING TO DISSIPATE...
HUH...
I SEE TWO PEOPLE.
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE JUST STANDING THERE, GLARING AT EACH OTHER..
!
IT'S HARD TO MAKE OUT...
WHICH ONE IS YOUR MASTER KAKASHI?
!!
OH!!
ONE OF THEM'S MOVING!!



RRRRROAR!!
!!
!!
SHUD
DER

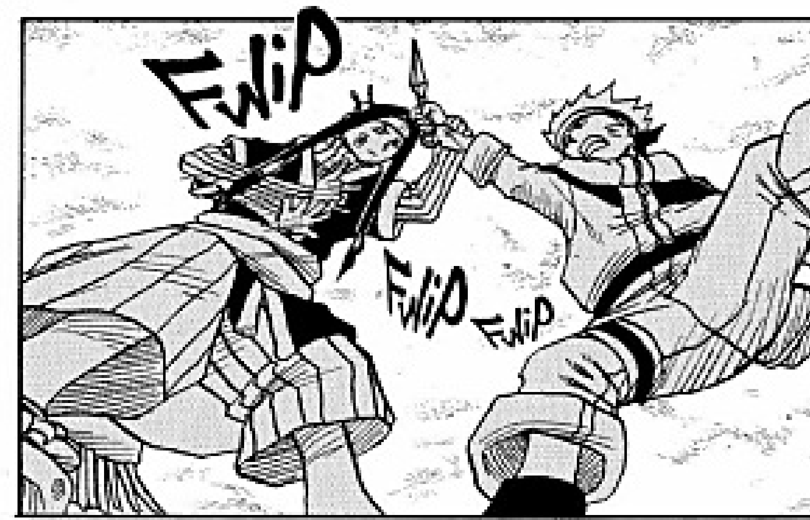
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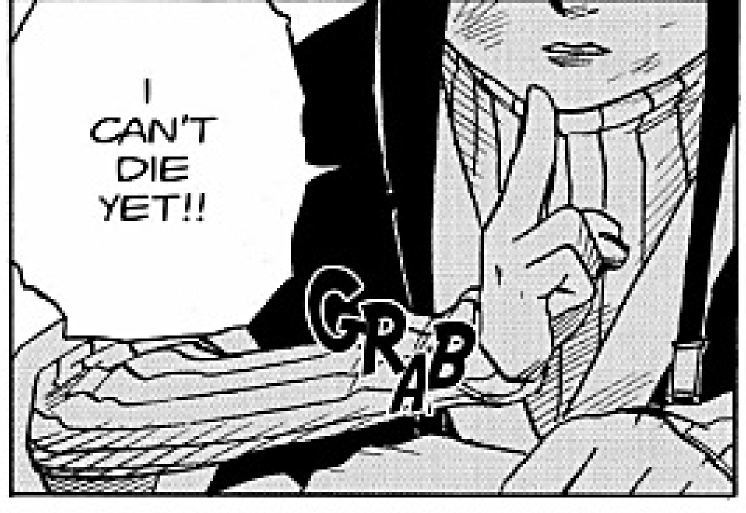
SMAP







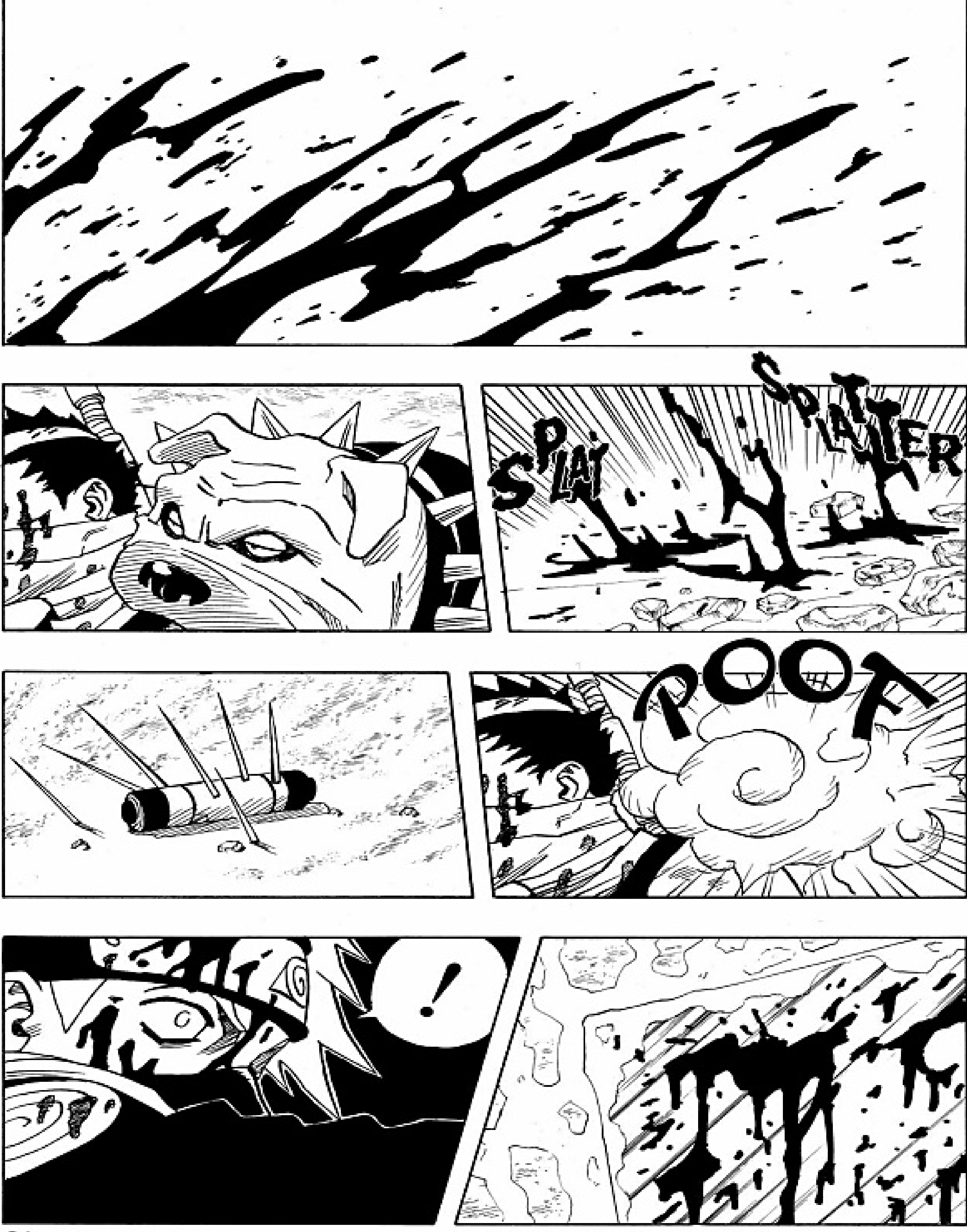




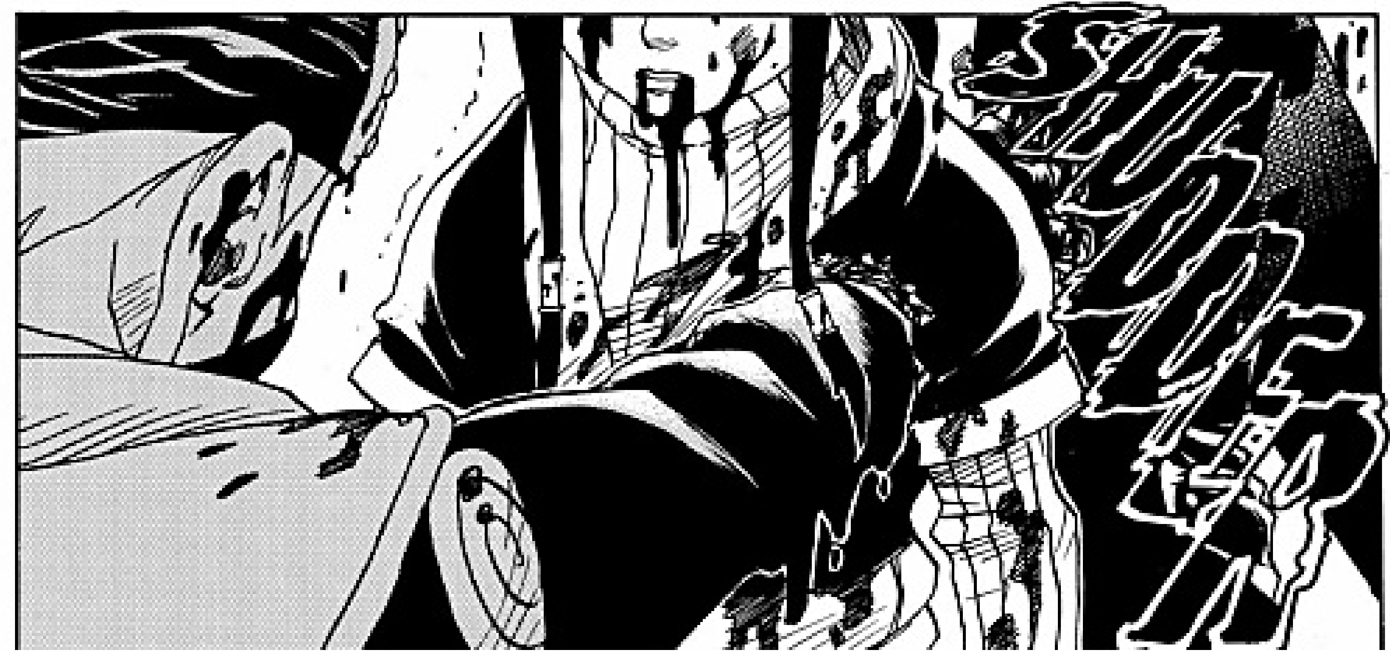


WHAT?
...!!!
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
KLATTER
plix
plix
PLIT


!!
SCHUUULGKK
AIEE!!
WH-WHAT THE-!!


SPLAT
SPLATTER
POOF
!





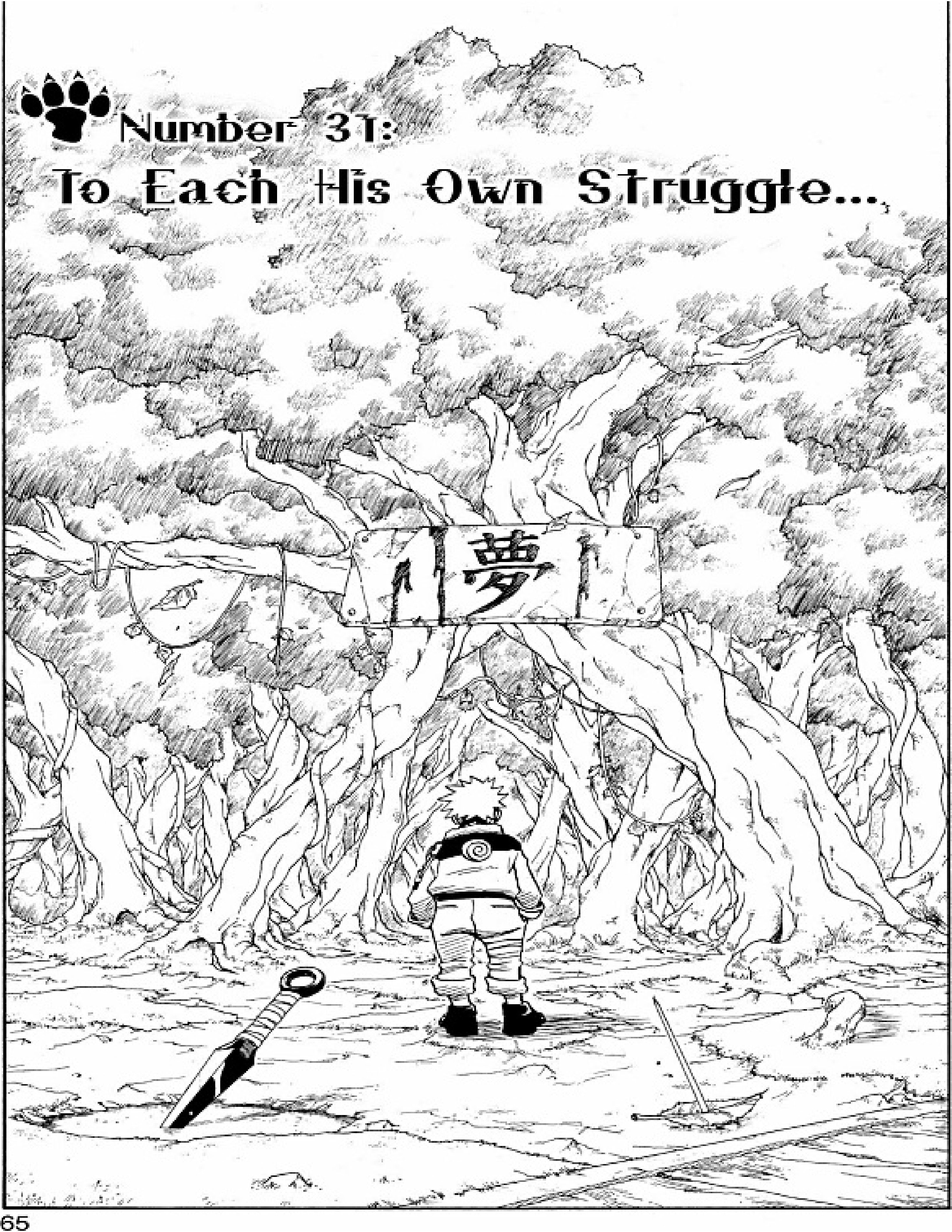

!
KOFF






ZABUZA... S-SIR...
!


...YOU SAID MY FUTURE WAS DEATH...
HEH HEH... BUT YOU MISSED AGAIN, KAKASHI.
SNEER


Number 31:
To Each His Own Struggle...
夢


BAM
BAM
OPEN UP! PLEASE!!!
MISTER GI'ICHI!
BAM


BAM
BAM

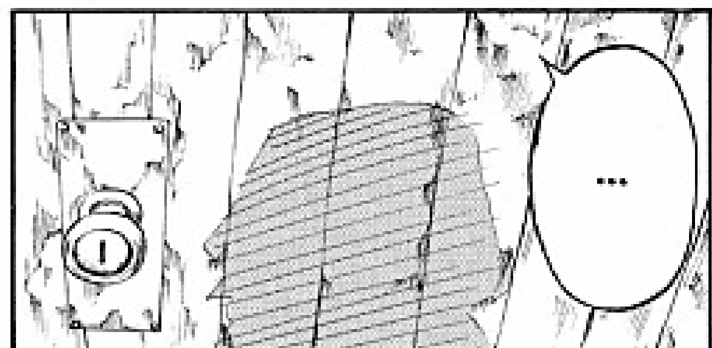

I'M SORRY... INARI, WE'RE NOT GOING TO FIGHT BACK ANY MORE...


I NEED YOU TO COME WITH ME TO THE BRIDGE!!!
IF WE STICK TOGETHER, THIS TIME WE CAN BEAT GATÔ AND HIS WHOLE GANG!


!
YOUR FATHER...
..WAS A HERO. BUT HE'S GONE NOW.


IF WE FIGHT, WE'LL BE THROWING AWAY A LOT OF LIVES.
WE'VE ALREADY SACRIFICED AND LOST SO MUCH.
NONE OF US WANTS ANY MORE LOSSES... ANYMORE REGRETS.

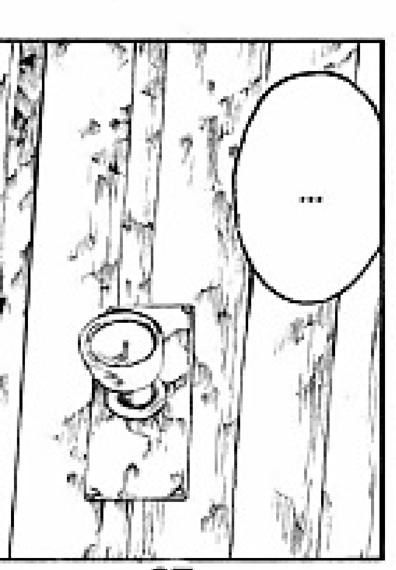

...
...I DON'T WANT ANY REGRETS EITHER.


...


THAT'S WHY...
...I HAVE TO FIGHT.


A MAN HAS TO LIVE HIS LIFE SO THAT HE DOESN'T END UP WITH ANY REGRETS...


...I LOVE MY MA, AND GRANDPA, AND YOU...
...AND EVERY-ONE IN THE VILLAGE...

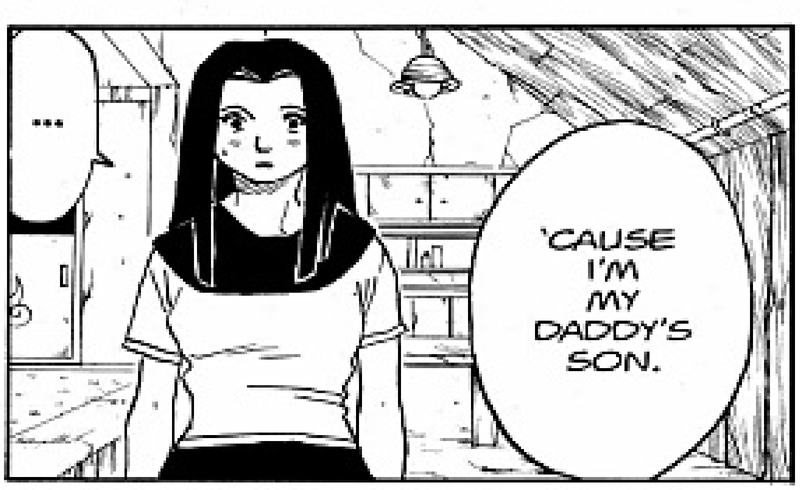

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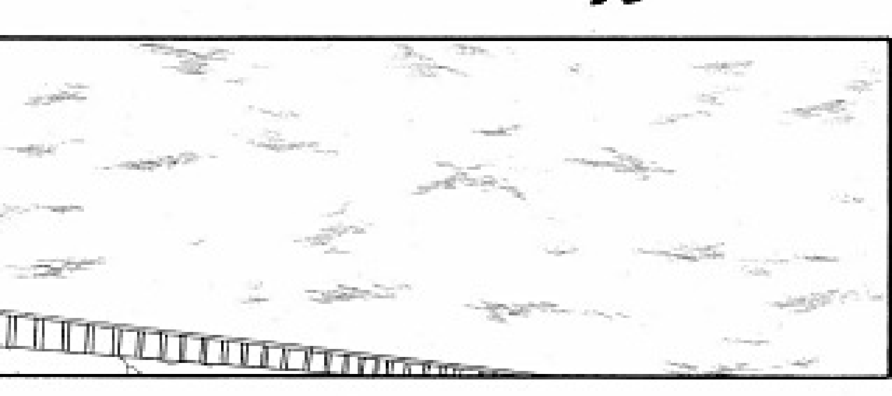

AND I UNDERSTAND NOW...
THAT I CAN'T PROTECT ANYONE BY BEING A BIG CRYBABY.
SKF
TAK
...
LITTLE INARI IS GROWING UP TO BE A FINE YOUNG MAN, ISN'T HE...
ARE YOU SURE HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT LIKE THAT... BY HIMSELF?
WAIT! YOU CAN'T GO TO THE BRIDGE ALONE!
HAVE TO. NO ONE IN THE VILLAGE WAS WILLING TO GO WITH ME.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN...!
YANK


I MAY BE LITTLE...
... BUT I KNOW HOW TO FIGHT...


YOU'RE JUST A LITTLE BOY!
TROMP
TROMP


INARI, WAIT!
KREEEEAK


...
'CAUSE I'M MY DADDY'S SON.

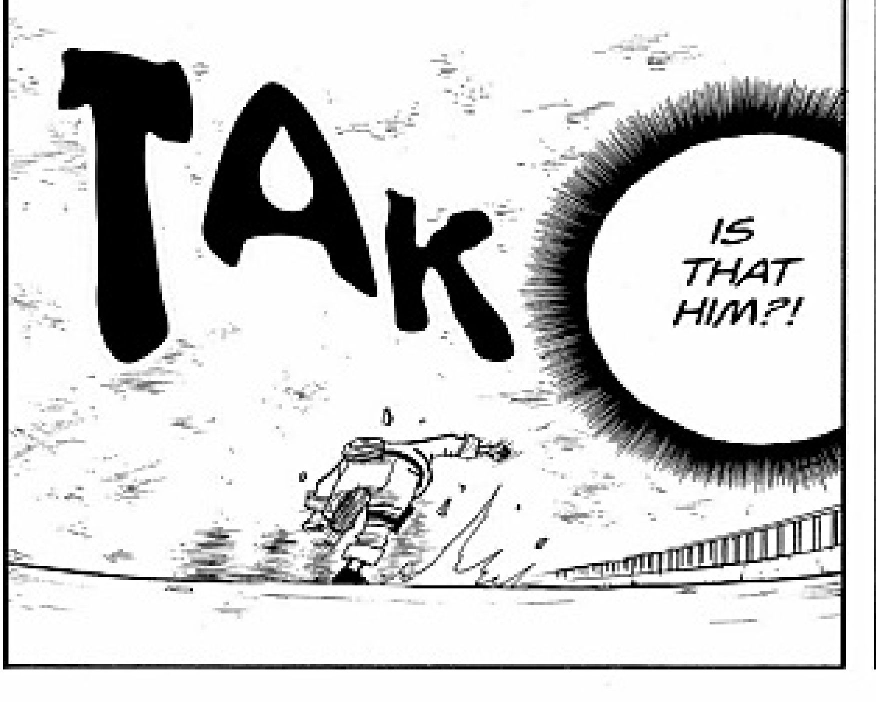



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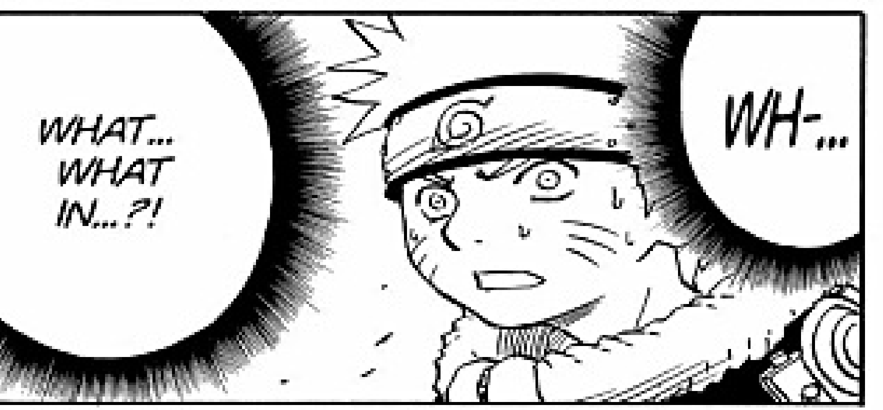

THE MIST'S FADING... I'M SEEING THINGS MORE CLEARLY...
!


HAKU...
FWP
WHERE IS HE?!
FWP







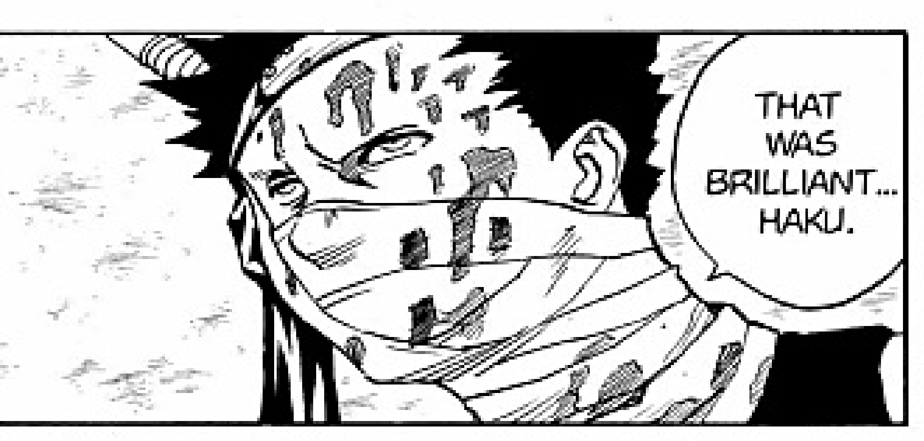


SCHLUUGK



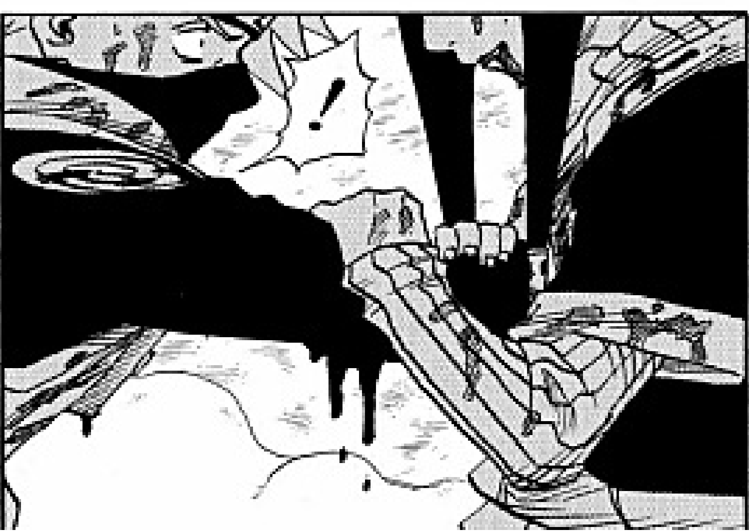
ISN'T THAT THAT BOY IN THE MASK...?!

HE JUMPED BETWEEN... TO SAVE ZABUZA...

CLENCH

THAT WAS BRILLIANT... HAKU.

HEH HEH...
...

...

...THE BOY...

!

...IS ALREADY...

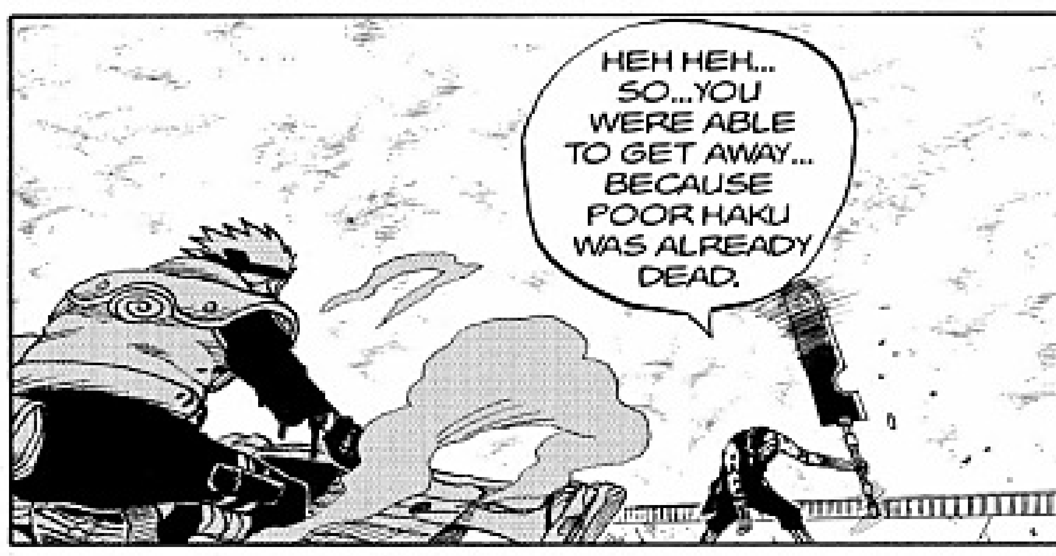
...DEAD.






!!
MASTER KAKASHI!!
I AM YOUR WEAPON AND YOUR TOOL...
I REALLY DID FIND A TREASURE IN THAT GUTTER...
TO THINK THAT HE'D GRANT ME THIS MARVELOUS CHANCE IN THE END!!
ARRRH--!
GRAB


THAT UNFORGIVABLE SCUMBAG!
GRRR


HEH HEH... SO...YOU WERE ABLE TO GET AWAY... BECAUSE POOR HAKU WAS ALREADY DEAD.

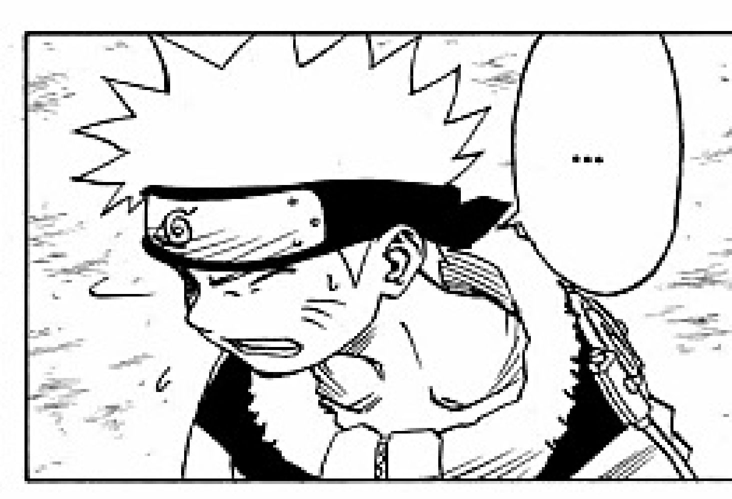

SHF

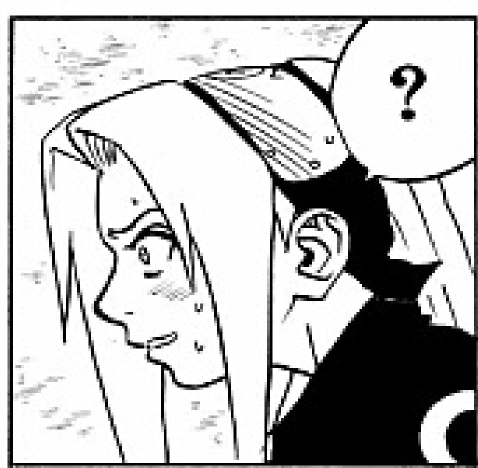

NARUTO... STAY OUT OF THIS!
!


THIS IS MY FIGHT!!
!
...NARUTO...?
NARUTO--!!! YOU'RE ALIVE--!!
SAKURA!!

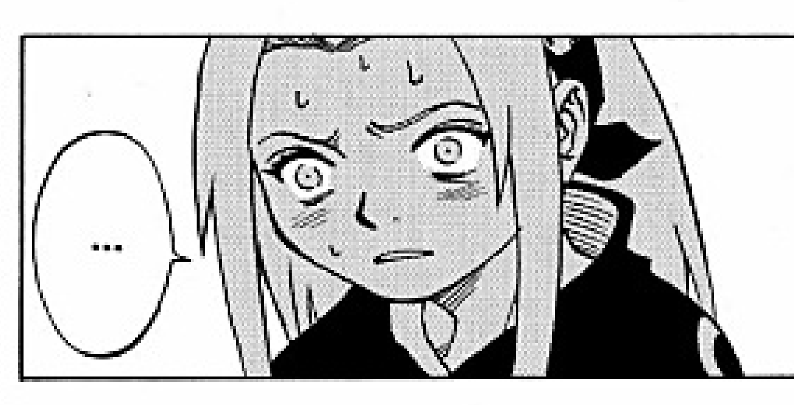

HUH?
WHAT ABOUT SASUKE?


NARUTO!! WHERE'S SASUKE?!!!
.!!
FLINCH

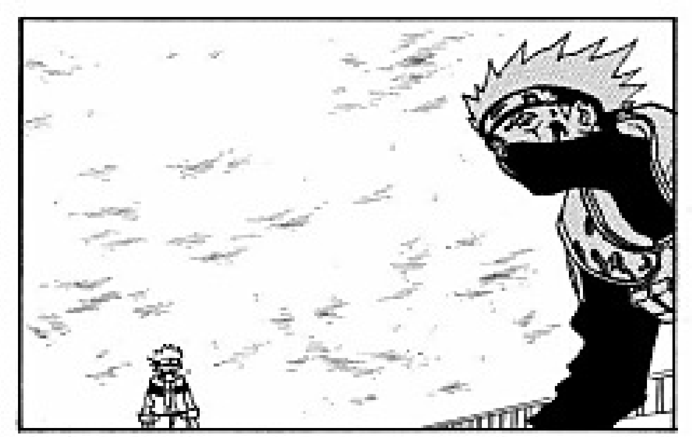

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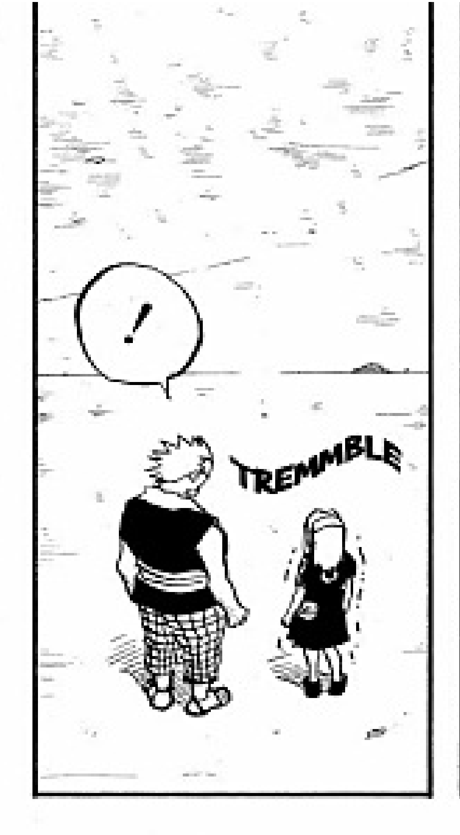

?


...

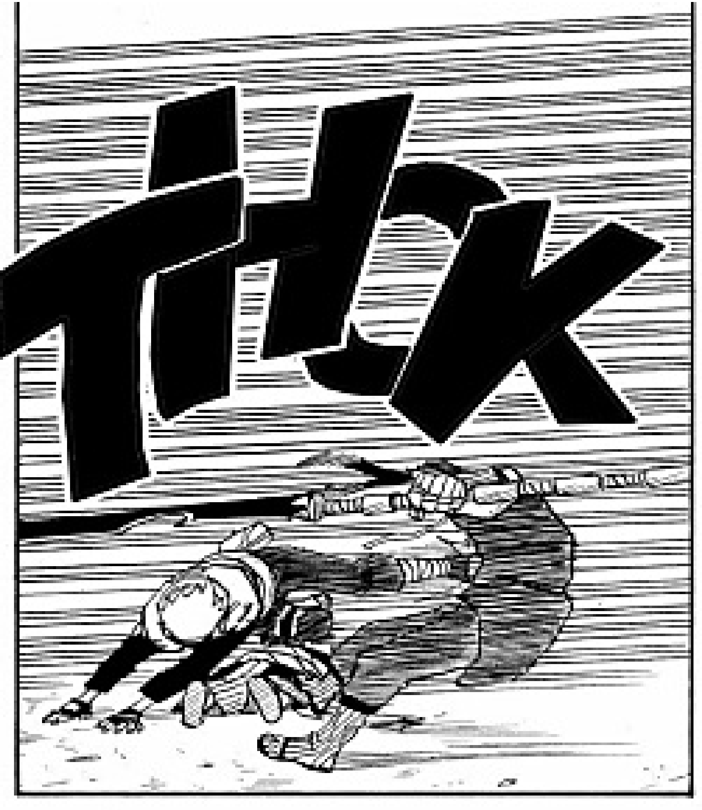

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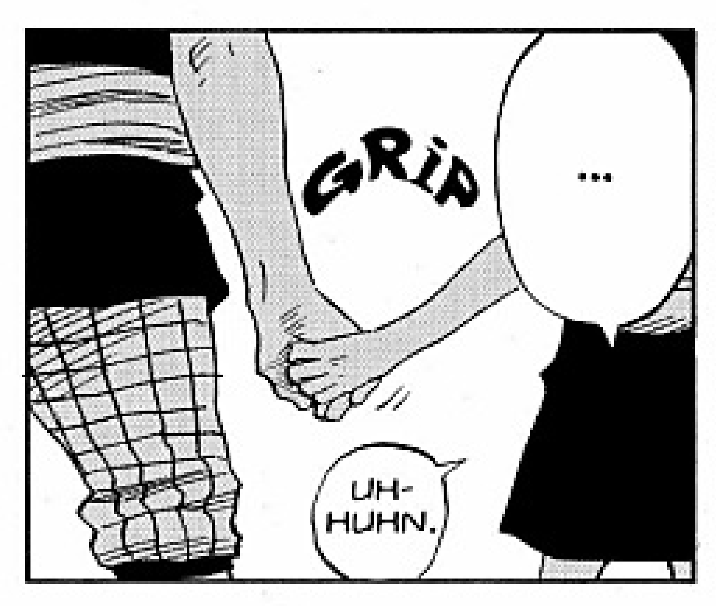

TAK
.!!
FOCUS, KAKASHI! DON'T LET YOUR-SELF BE DISTRACTED!!!




!
TREMMBLE

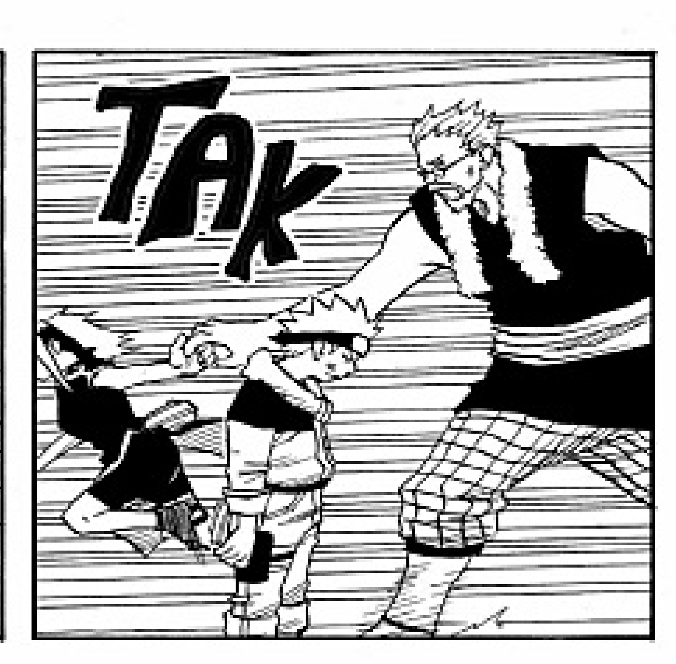

GACK!

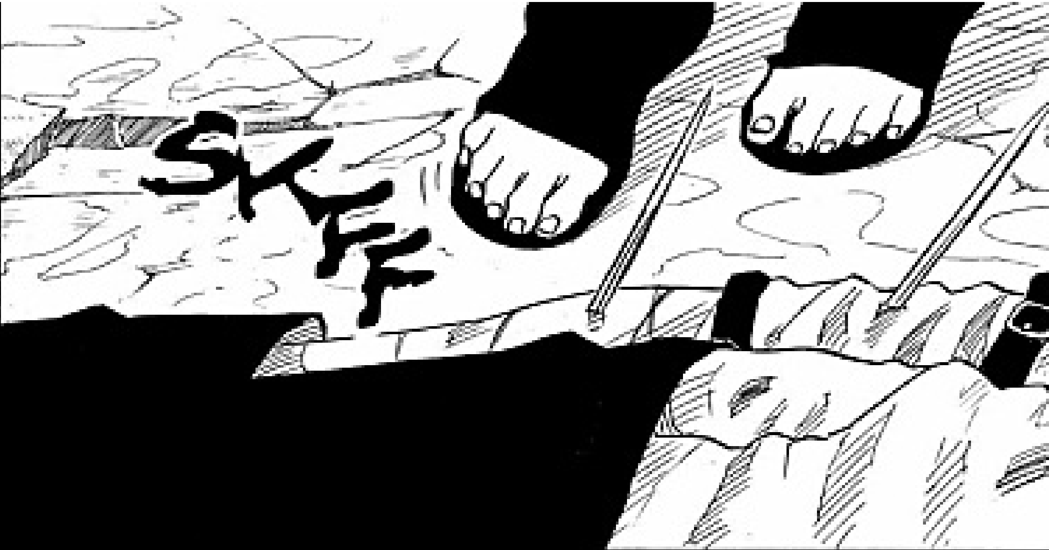

THUNK

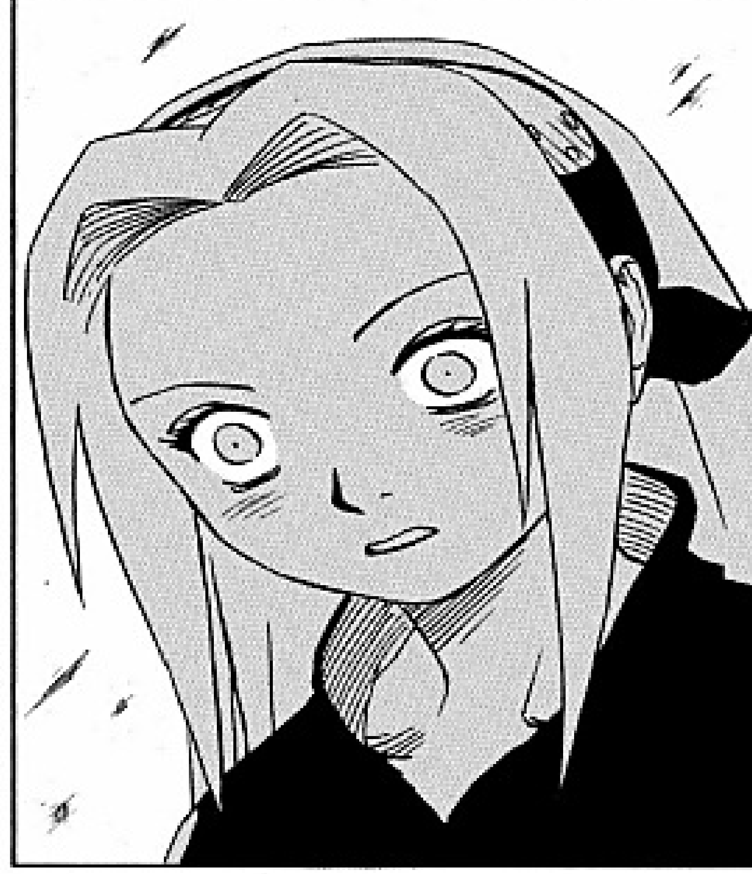
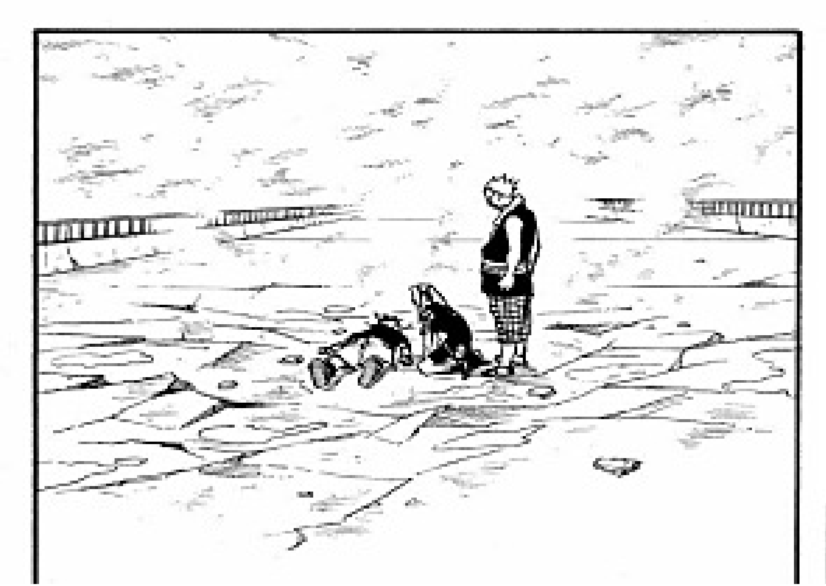

...
GRIP
UH-HUHN.

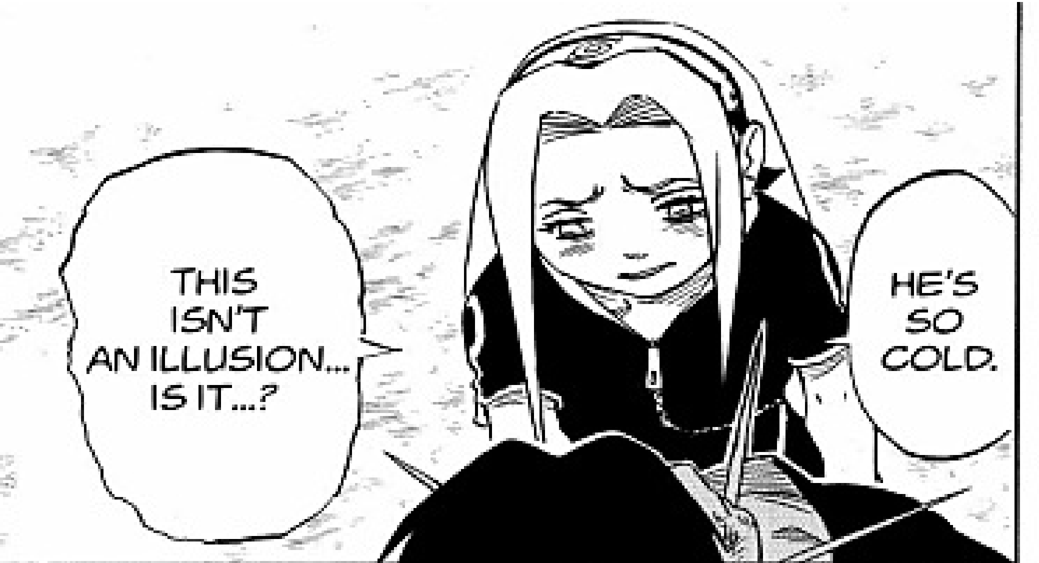

...I'LL STAY WITH YOU
SO THAT YOU WON'T BE DISOBEYING YOUR MASTER'S ORDER.




TAK


!!

SKFF

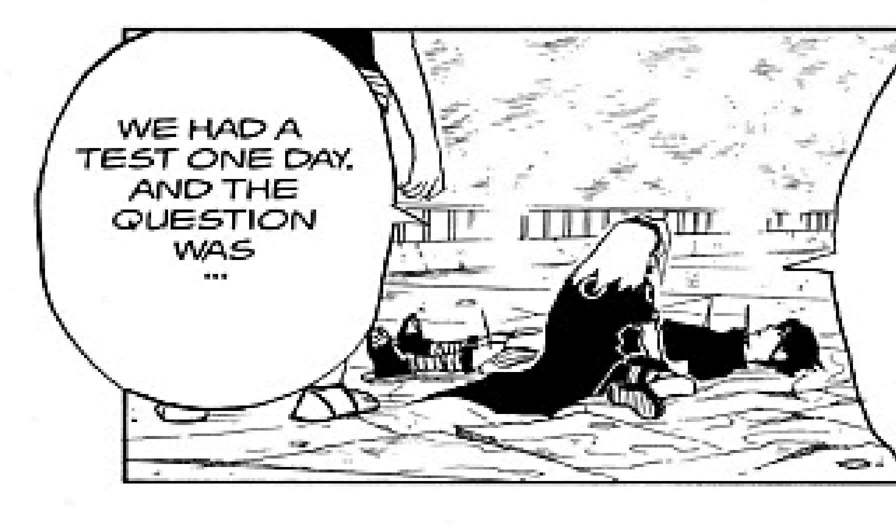





THIS ISN'T AN ILLUSION... IS IT...?
HE'S SO COLD.


SHF


I...
... ALWAYS GOT PERFECT SCORES ON ALL MY TESTS IN SCHOOL.


DON'T HOLD BACK FOR MY SAKE. THERE ARE TIMES IT'S WHEN RIGHT TO GIVE IN AND SHED SOME GOOD HONEST TEARS.


I MEMORIZED EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THE ONE HUNDRED RULES OF CONDUCT FOR NINJA AND SHINOBI. I USED TO WRITE THEM OUT WITH PRIDE.
WE HAD A TEST ONE DAY. AND THE QUESTION WAS ...


!


?!


"WHAT IS THE TWENTY-FIFTH RULE OF SHINOBI CONDUCT?"
JUST LIKE ALWAYS, I WROTE IT DOWN.

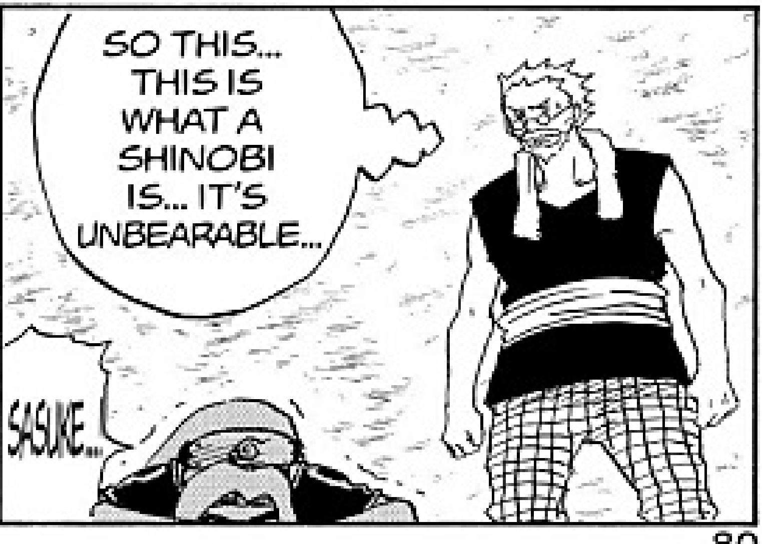

...!

"NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, TRUE SHINOBI MUST NEVER... EVER.. SHOW THEIR EMOTIONS!

"TH-THE MISSION IS THE ONLY PRIORITY. CARRY THAT IN YOUR HEART. AND NEVER, NEVER, SH-SHED A TEAR..."











WHY... WHY... CAN'T I KEEP UP...?
WH
OP
DAMN IT!!
TAK
UHN...!
...!

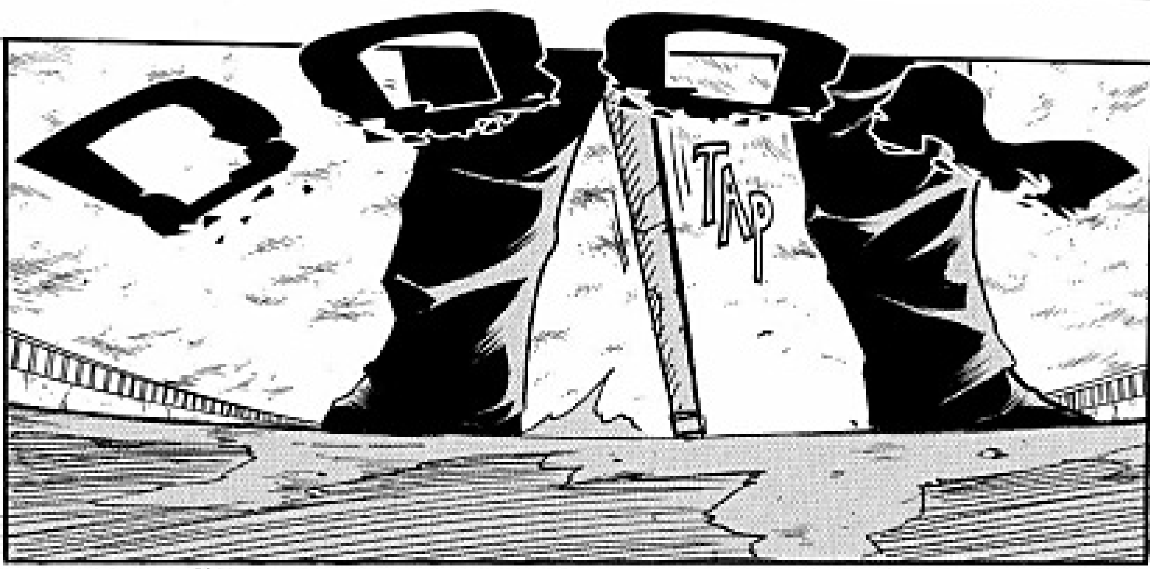








HEH-HEH! I WONDER HOW THE FIGHT'S GOING!




!!
SMAK
FWUP
FWUP
32: THE TOOLS CALLED SHINOBI
THIS IS GOOD-BYE...
..."DEMON"!
SHUKK
!

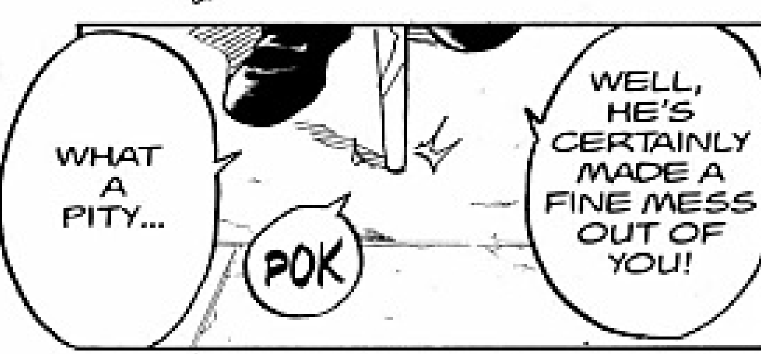

!!
Number 32:
The Tools Called Shinobi

!
K-KLUNK
DRIP
KOFF

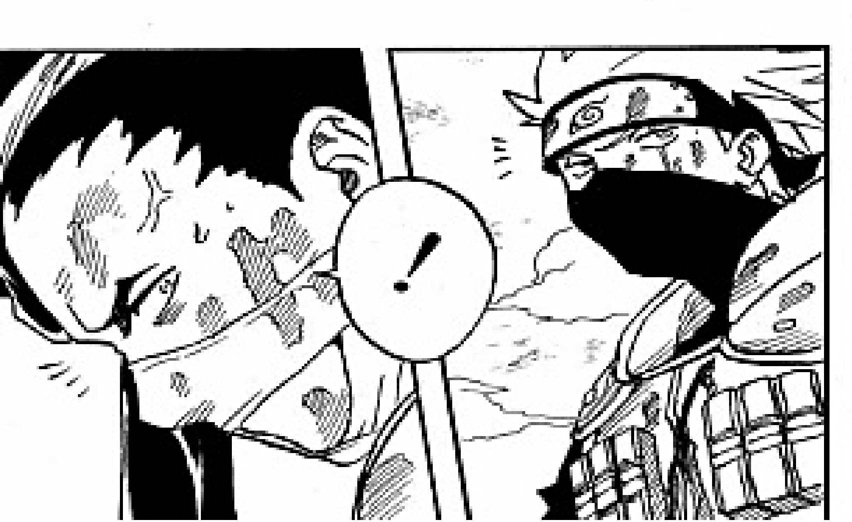













BA BAM
MUTTER
ZABUZA!
MUTTER
—THIS WAS WHAT I HAD IN MIND ALL ALONG.
HEH HEH HEH— THERE'S BEEN A SLIGHT CHANGE OF PLAN, ZABUZA. OR OF YOUR PLANS, ANYWAY.
HIM...
WHAT ARE YOU... DOING HERE? AND... WHY.... DID YOU... BRING... ALL OF THEM?!
GATŌ...
YOU MUST HAVE GUESSED. I NEVER INTENDED TO PAY YOU.
WHAT?
YOU'RE GOING TO DIE, "DEMON"... HERE AND NOW.

...IT'S SUCH A BOTHER HIRING A SKILLED SHINOBI AFFILIATED WITH ONE OF THE TOP VILLAGES. IT'S EXPENSIVE... AND THEY TEND TO HAVE FRIENDS WHO OBJECT WHEN I BETRAY AND KILL THEM.
IT'S SO MUCH SIMPLER TO HIRE *UKENIN*—RENEGADES—LIKE YOURSELF. NO ONE CARES WHAT I DO TO YOUR KIND ONCE THE JOB IS DONE.
ALL OF YOU NINJA ARE SO EAGER TO FIGHT EACH OTHER. ONCE YOU'VE WORN EACH OTHER DOWN, COMMON THUGS CAN FINISH OFF THE REST.
IT'S A GREAT BUSINESS PLAN—EFFICIENT AND INEXPENSIVE.


HEH HEH... YOU'RE NO DEMON...
MORE LIKE A **BABY** DEMON, IF THAT.


CALLING YOURSELF THE DEMON OF KIRIGAKURE IS JUST PLAIN FALSE ADVERTISING!
MY ONLY MISTAKE WAS HIRING YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE.


HAHAHAHA
WHO THE HECK ARE THEY?
THAT'S SOME CROWD!


GAHAHAHAHAHAHA
THE SHAPE YOU'RE IN, WE'LL TAKE YOU DOWN WITHOUT EVEN BREAKING A SWEAT!

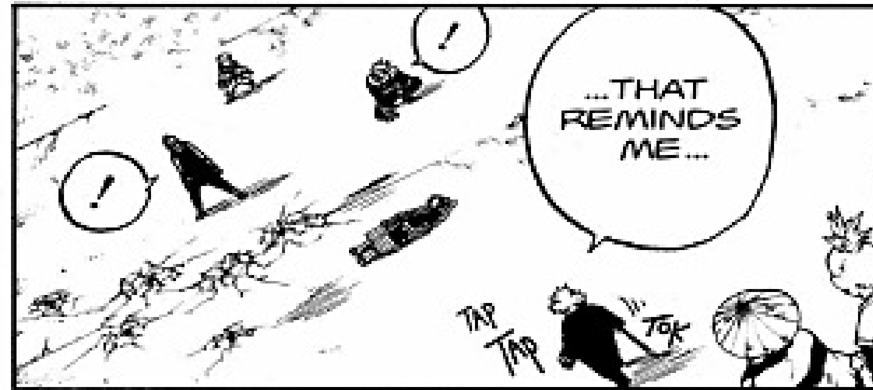

I NO LONGER HAVE ANY REASON TO WANT TO ASSASSINATE TAZUNA...
...WHICH SETTLES OUR DIFFERENCES.


HA HA HA HA
OUR FIGHT IS OVER.
FORGIVE ME... KAKASHI...
GYA HA
!!


HA HA HA HA HA
YOU'RE RIGHT.
GYA HA HA

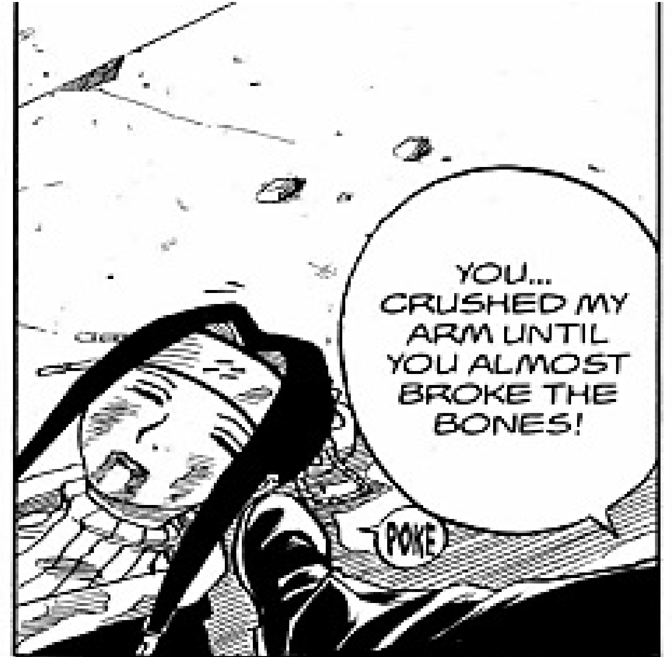

HA HA HA
YEAH...
HUH?


I STILL HAVE A SCORE TO SETTLE.

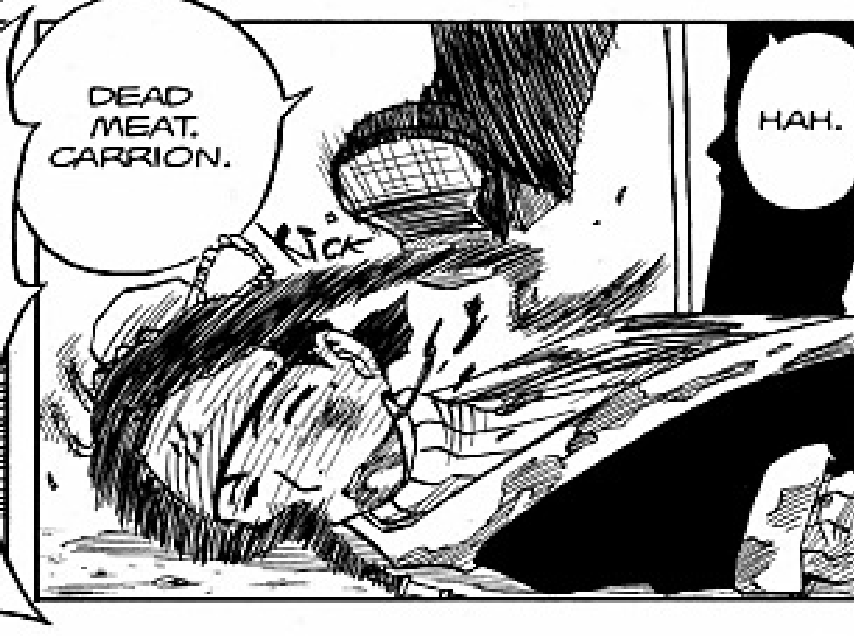

!
!
...THAT REMINDS ME...
TAP TAP
TOK


TAP
TAP




YOU... CRUSHED MY ARM UNTIL YOU ALMOST BROKE THE BONES!
POKE




HAH.
DEAD MEAT. CARRION.
KICK


WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOING, YOU CREEP?!


DASH


COOL DOWN. THINK. THERE'S A LOT OF THEM.
HEY!!
GRAB


HEY, WHY DON'T YOU DO SOMETHING?! HE WORKED FOR YOU! HE WAS PRACTICALLY YOUR SLAVE!!

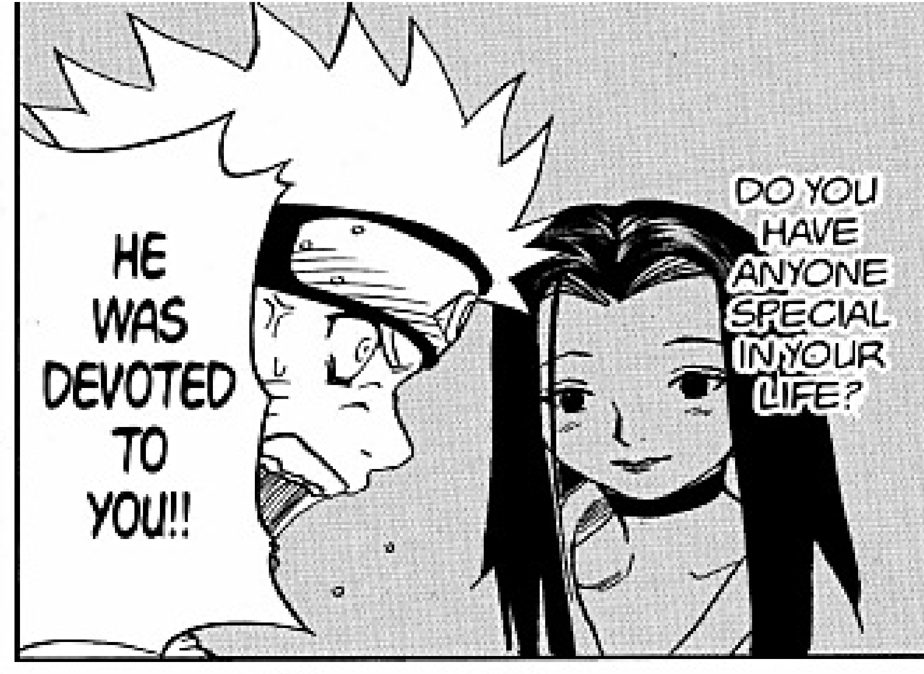


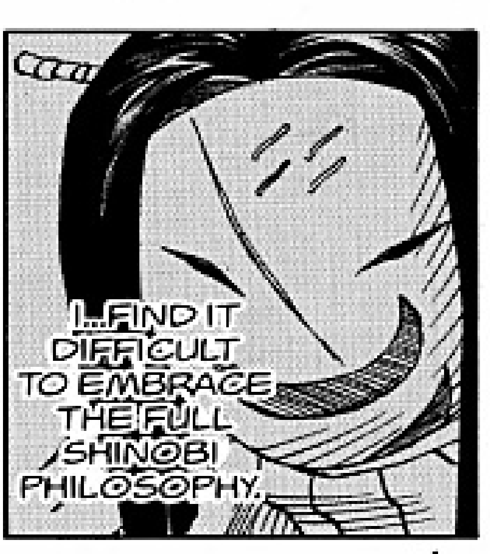

LIKE WHAT?
HAKU IS DEAD.
!!
BUT...
BUT YOU SHOULD CARE! THAT FAT SCUMBAG IS DESECRATING HIM!!!
HE WAS YOUR COMRADE... YOUR PARTNER... HE WORKED FOR YOU FOR YEARS!!!
...GATŌ'S BEEN USING ME... AND I USED HAKU.
WEREN'T YOU LISTENING? IT'S A SHINOBI'S LOT. ALL OF US ARE EITHER USERS, OR TOOLS... OR BOTH.
I DIDN'T VALUE HAKU FOR HIMSELF... BUT FOR THE TAINT HIS BLOOD CARRIED... AND FOR WHAT HIS TALENTS COULD DO FOR ME.
I APOLOGIZE FOR NOTHING.
YOU...
...
DO YOU REALLY MEAN THAT?
!
STOP IT, NARUTO! LEAVE HIM ALONE. OUR QUARREL IS OVER.
BESIDES WHICH...



SHUT UP--!!
HE'S STILL MY ENEMY!!!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
...
WHO IS THAT OBNOXIOUS BRAT?... HE'S BEEN MAKING QUITE A NUISANCE OF HIMSELF!
FWA
HE...
HE REALLY CARED ABOUT YOU!!


WHEN PEOPLE ARE PROTECTING SOMETHING TRULY PRECIOUS TO THEM...
...THEY TRULY CAN BECOME... AS STRONG AS THEY MUST BE!

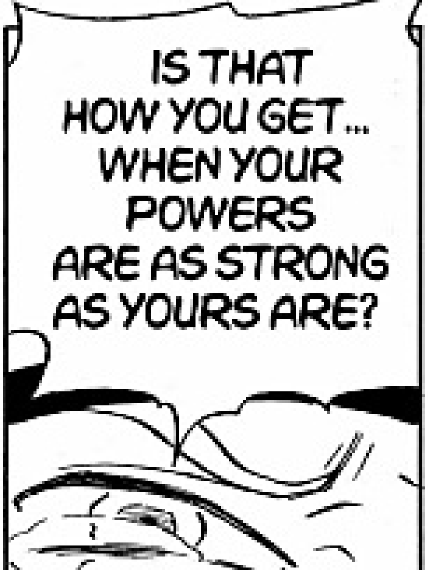

DO YOU HAVE ANYONE SPECIAL IN YOUR LIFE?
HE WAS DEVOTED TO YOU!!


I...FIND IT DIFFICULT TO EMBRACE THE FULL SHINOBI PHILOSOPHY.


BUT YOU THINK THAT'S JUST NOTHING, THAT HE WAS NOTHING. YOU DON'T FEEL A THING!




...


IS THAT HOW YOU GET... WHEN YOUR POWERS ARE AS STRONG AS YOURS ARE?


I'M WILLING TO DO WHATEVER IT TAKES... TO FULFILL THAT PERSON'S DREAMS...
TO THAT END, I WILL BECOME A TRUE SHINOBI...




ARE YOU REALLY THAT HEARTLESS?


I'M WILLING TO DO WHATEVER IT TAKES... TO FULFILL THAT PERSON'S DREAMS...
DOING SO IS MY OWN DREAM.


HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR YOU!




TO DIE AS HIS TOOL...


I WAS SO HAPPY...!

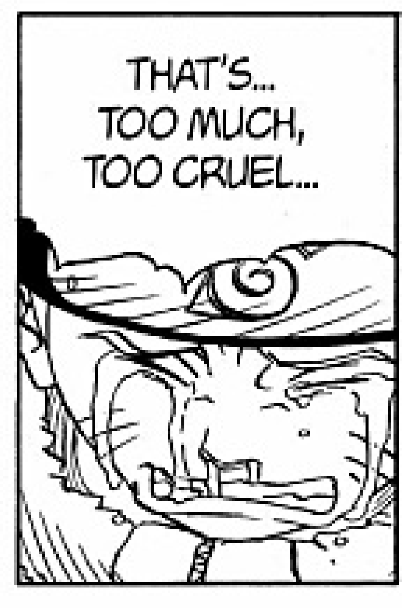

HE DIED... WITHOUT ANY OF HIS DREAMS EVER COMING TRUE.




PLIT
PLIT




KID.
...

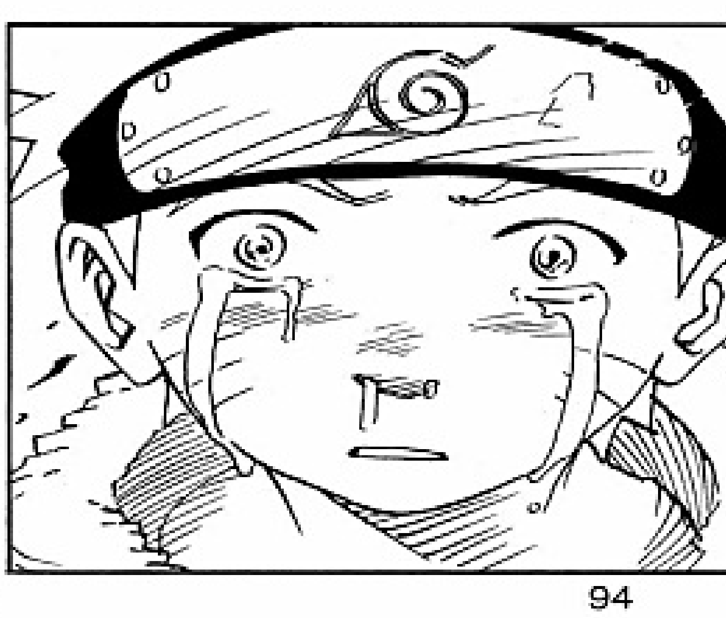

THAT'S... TOO MUCH, TOO CRUEL...

...NOT...

...ANOTHER WORD.

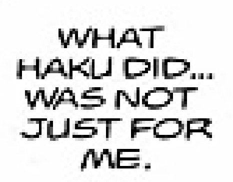
PLIT

PLIT








WHAT HAKU DID... WAS NOT JUST FOR ME.
WHILE WE FOUGHT, HE BROKE HIS HEART... OVER YOU... AND YOUR FRIENDS. THAT'S THE TRUTH.


...!
CHA


KID...


YOU'RE RIGHT, YOU KNOW.
...I'M GLAD MY LAST BATTLE... WAS AGAINST YOU...BOY.
?!
...HUH?


HE WAS TOO KIND... TOO GENTLE.
BITE

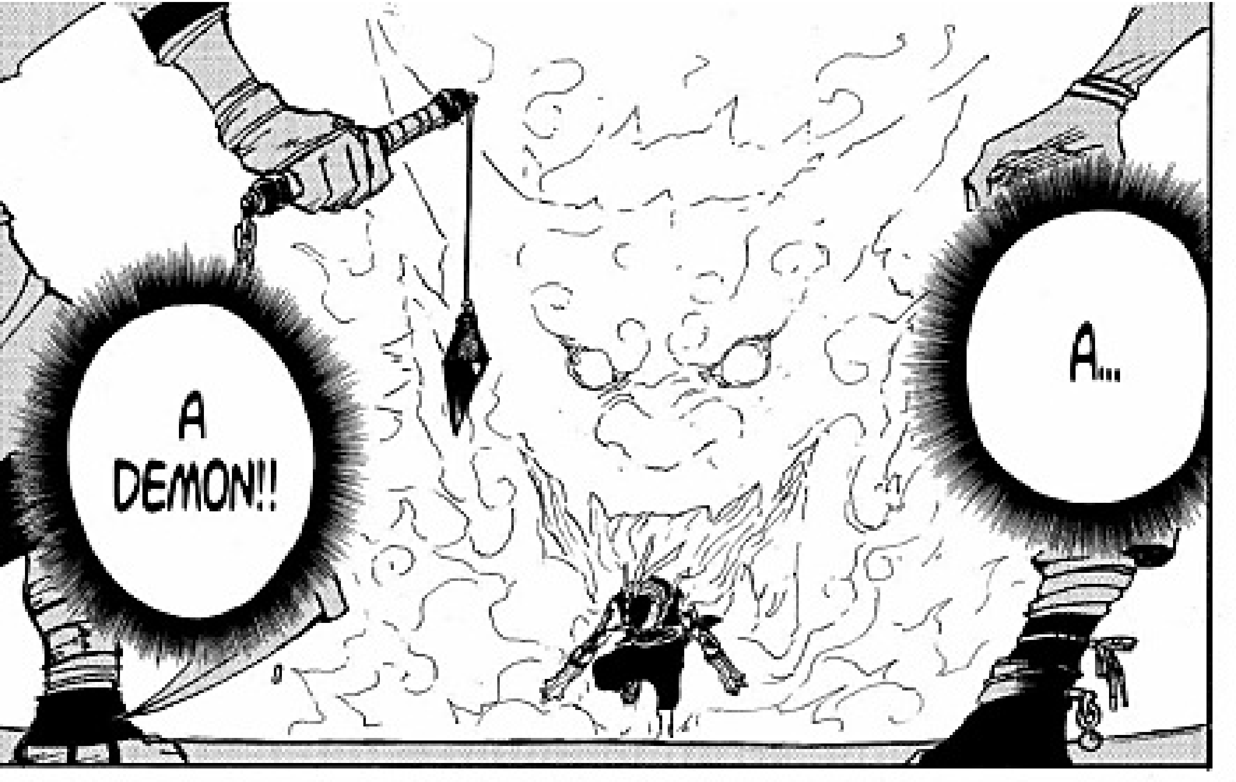

WOULD YOU LEND ME YOUR KUNAI KNIFE?
FLUTTER
...


SURE.


HUNH? UH...
!!


!
AND I'VE LOST... EVERYTHING.
SAY WHAT WE WILL, DO WHAT WE WILL. IN THE END, WE SHINOBI ARE STILL JUST PEOPLE AFTER ALL... WITH FEELINGS ALL-TOO-HUMAN.


CHUCK
TIK
WHAT?!
THOP
THAT'S ENOUGH! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? KILL ALL OF THEM!
THOP
THOP
YEAH!!
LET'S GO!
EVEN IF YOU'RE A NINJA, YOU'RE HALF-DEAD, AGAINST ALL OF US!
YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE!


A...
A DEMON!!

!






CHOK CHOK CHOK
WHY WON'T YOU DIE?!

I-IF YOU'RE IN SUCH A HURRY... TO BE REUNITED WITH YOUR LITTLE FRIEND... GO ALONE!

I... HAVE NO INTENTION... OF GOING TO THE SAME PLACE... AS HAKU...

WH- WHAT ARE YOU BABBLING ABOUT?

UGH...

HEH...



EVEN AN OGRE IN NAME ONLY... A WASHOUT FROM KIRIGAKURE VILLAGE... CAN BECOME A REAL DEMON IN HOW HE MEETS HIS DEATH.

AHH--!

SPLURT

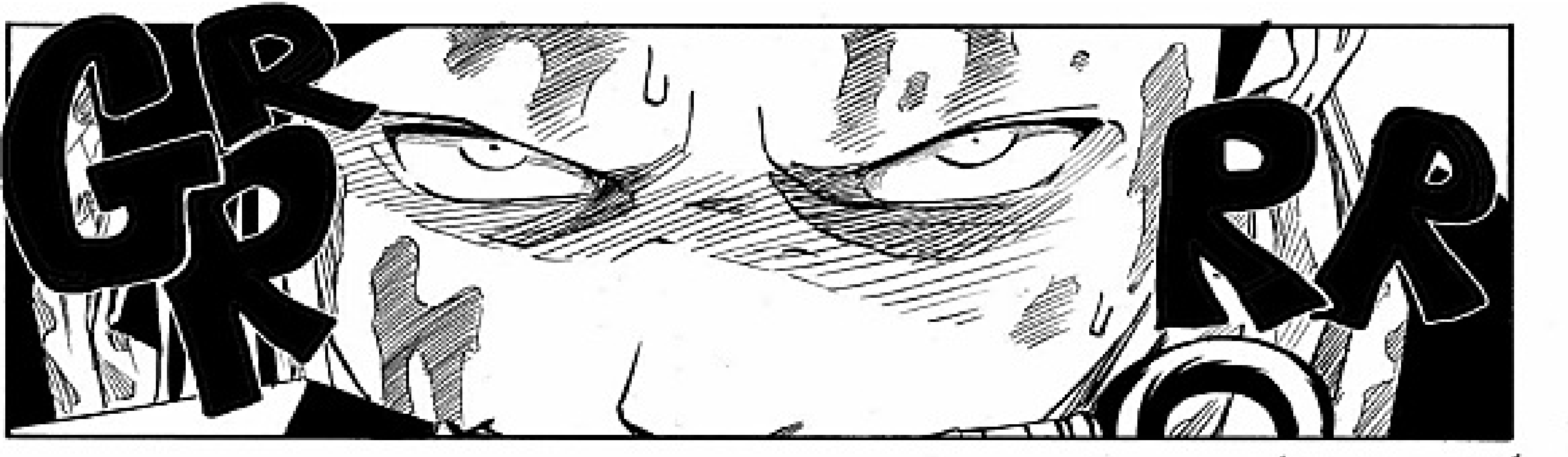
AIEEE--!

ONCE WE'RE IN HELL, I CAN TAKE MY TIME, AND SHOW YOU OVER... AND OVER... WHO IS, OR IS NOT, "A BABY DEMON"!

!!



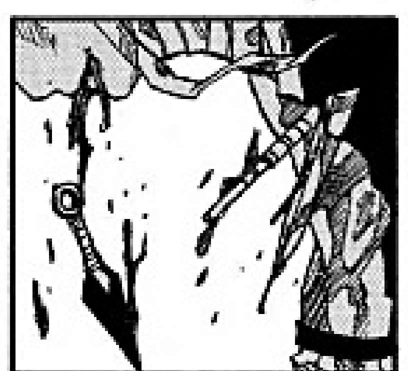
WHOK
AUUGH!!
THOP
THOP
GULP
...
THUD

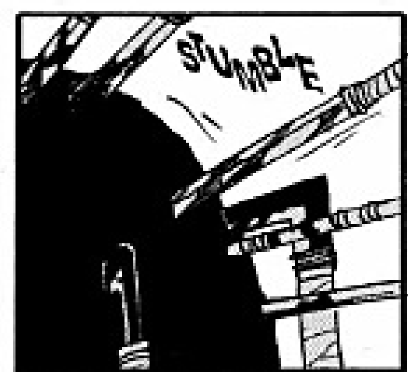

GRRRR

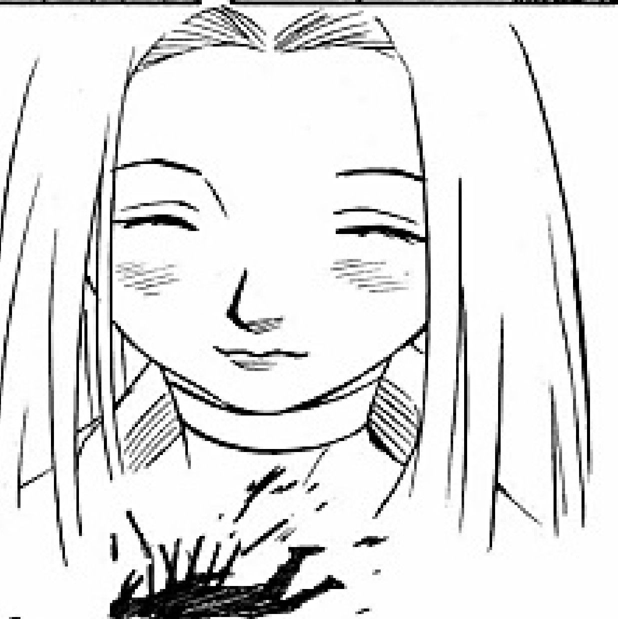

EEEEK!!




PLEASE... KEEP ME BESIDE YOU!!




STUMBLE


THANKS FOR EVERYTHING...
IT'S... GOODBYE NOW, HAKU...
AND I'M SORRY...

KISHIMOTO MASASHI'S THIRD MANGA REJECT SPECIAL!



ONCE AGAIN, THE ROUGH SKETCH TO THE LEFT IS FROM ANOTHER REJECTED MANGA. IT WAS A BASEBALL MANGA, TITLED SIMPLY "BASEBALL KING." I PLAYED BASEBALL MYSELF, BACK IN MY STUDENT DAYS, SO I (MAYBE FOOLISHLY) THOUGHT I WOULD TRY MY HAND AT A BASEBALL STORY.

DURING THIS PERIOD, I WAS IN A SITUATION WHERE, NO MATTER HOW MANY CONCEPTS FOR ADVENTURE MANGA I SKETCHED OUT, I DIDN'T GET ANY GREEN LIGHTS, SO I THOUGHT I SHOULD GO FOR A SPORTS THEME.

BUT WHEN I ACTUALLY TRIED TO DRAW ONE, PERHAPS BECAUSE I WAS WRITING FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, IT BECAME A MORE REALISTIC WORK THAN I HAD INTENDED.

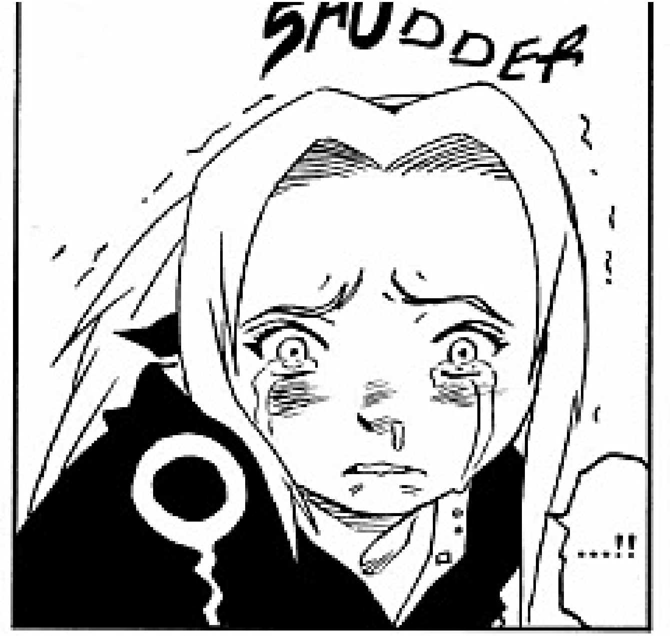
THE REASON IT FAILED WAS THAT IT WAS TOO SERIOUS FOR A SHONEN PUBLICATION. IT WASN'T ENTERTAINMENT.

HOWEVER, "BASEBALL KING" ACTUALLY STILL HOLDS A SPECIAL PLACE IN MY HEART. I SOMETIMES FIND MYSELF THINKING, "THAT WAS SO FUNNY... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S A REJECT, DARN IT...!"



33: THE BRIDGE OF THE HERO!!
DON'T LOOK AWAY.
THIS WAS THE END OF A MAN WHO LIVED FULL OUT.
...
YEAH...
SOB
LUB-DUP
SOB
SASUKE...
AM I... DEAD...?
SOB
SOB
SAKURA...?!
SOB
AM I... AM I...?!
SOB


Number 33:
The Bridge of The Hero!!
...SAKURA...
YOUR ARM'S HEAVY...



SHUDDER
...!!

...?

SNIFF
SOB
DRIP
DRIP
SNIFF

SASUKE!!!!
SASUKE!
SASUKE!!
GRAB
!

OHHHH!!

I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU, SAKURA.

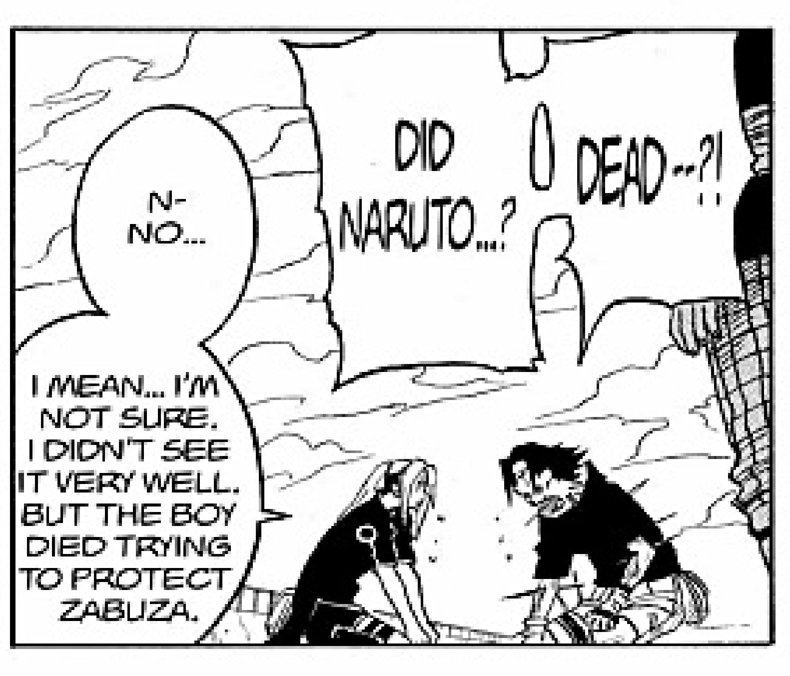
SAKURA... YOU'RE HURTING ME...
OH!
S-SORRY...

...

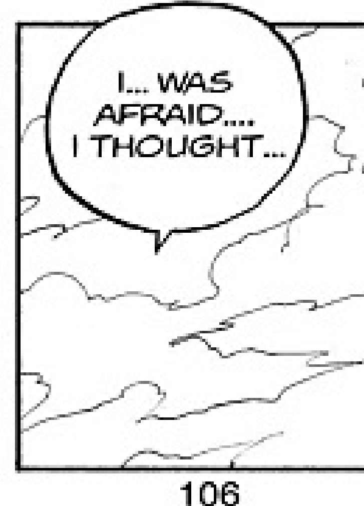

OOF
!!
...I'M ALL RIGHT... HOW'S NARUTO?
AND THAT... LITTLE CREEP IN THE MASK... WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?

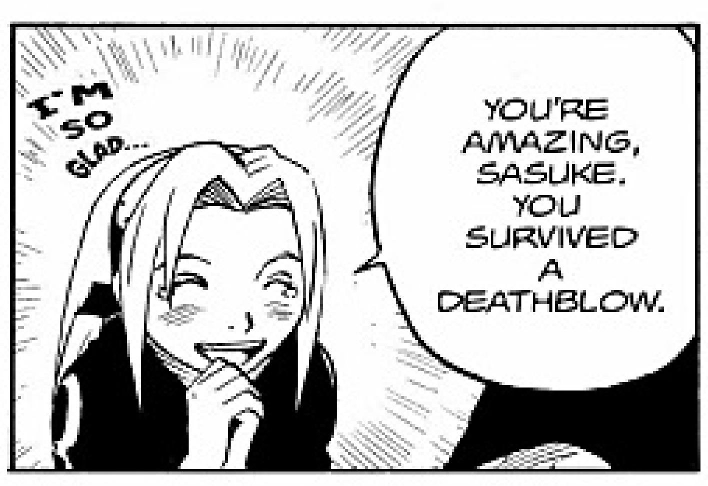

DON'T TRY TO MOVE!
NARUTO'S FINE! AND THE BOY IN THE MASK IS DEAD...


!!


DID NARUTO...?
DEAD--?!
N-NO...
I MEAN... I'M NOT SURE. I DIDN'T SEE IT VERY WELL. BUT THE BOY DIED TRYING TO PROTECT ZABUZA.


...
HMM.

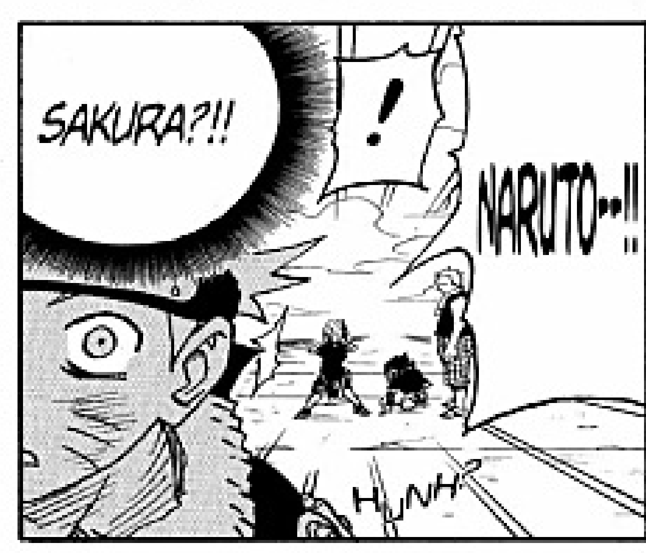

I... WAS AFRAID.... I THOUGHT...

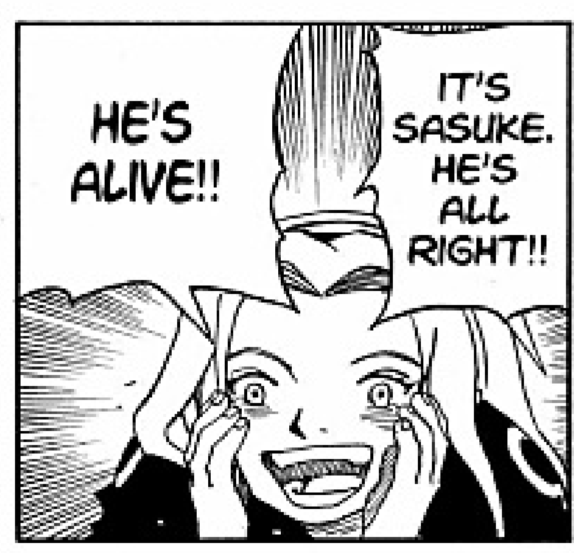

YOU'RE AMAZING, SASUKE. YOU SURVIVED A DEATHBLOW.
I'M SO GLAD...


...
NO...

NOT ME. HIM.

...HE NEVER PLANNED TO... FROM THE START...







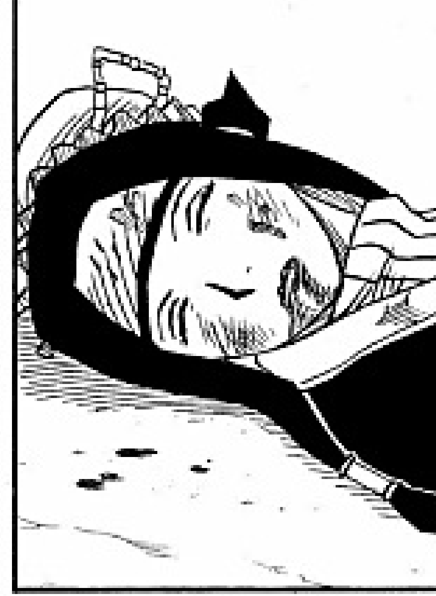
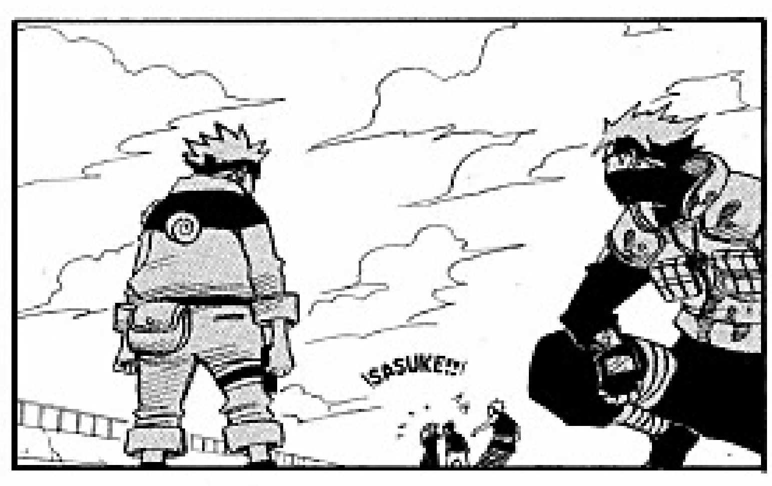
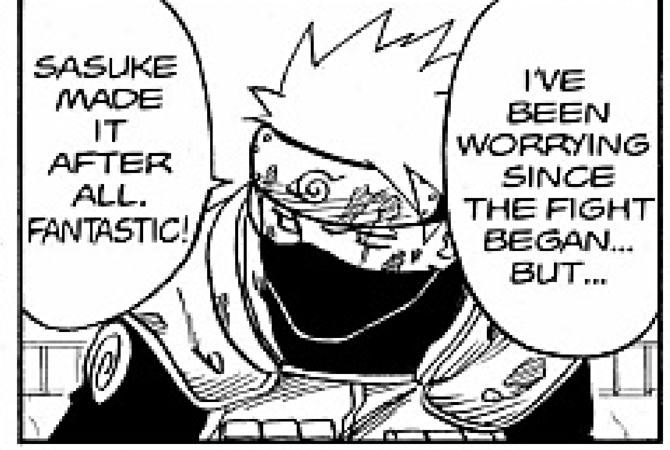


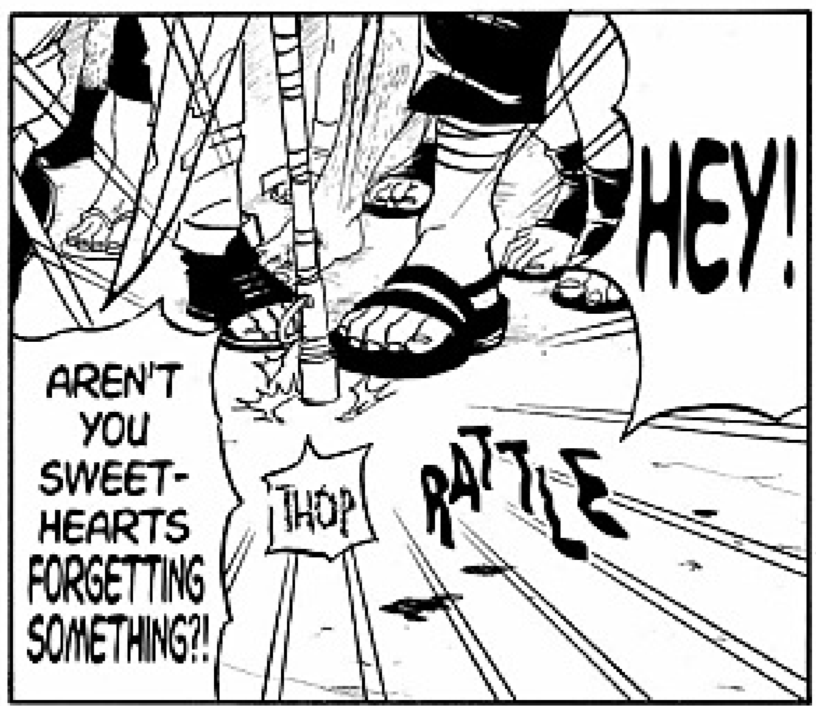







I GET IT... HE....

HE WAS TOO KIND... TOO GENTLE.
HAKU ....WHILE WE FOUGHT, HE BROKE HIS HEART... OVER YOU... AND YOUR FRIENDS. THAT'S THE TRUTH.


SASUKE!!!

I'VE BEEN WORRYING SINCE THE FIGHT BEGAN... BUT...
SASUKE MADE IT AFTER ALL. FANTASTIC!

!
!!

HEY!
AREN'T YOU SWEET-HEARTS FORGETTING SOMETHING?!
RATTLE
THOP

YOU NINJA KILLED OUR MEAL TICKET!

AND NOW YOU'RE GONNA DIE!!!

THE ONLY WAY WE CAN EVEN BREAK EVEN NOW...

...IS TO OVERRUN THE CITY AND LOOT EVERY BUSINESS AND HOME!!

OH YEAH!

K-CHK

K-CHK

CHAAAARGE

LET'S GO!

UHHH... THIS ISN'T GOOD.

MASTER KAKASHI— ISN'T THERE SOME TECHNIQUE WE CAN USE TO TAKE THEM ALL DOWN AT ONCE?

I'M AFRAID... WITH THE LIGHTNING BLADE, THE ILLUSIONS AND CONJURATIONS... FOR THE MOMENT, I'VE EXHAUSTED MY CHAKRA.

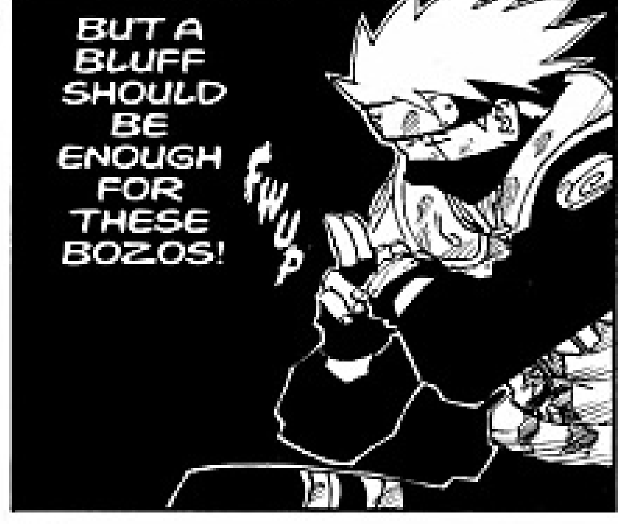





STOP WHERE YOU ARE.
THIS ISLAND IS OUR HOME. ONE STEP FURTHER...
YOU'LL DIE WHERE YOU STAND!
...
INARI...
ALL OF YOU...
INARI!!
HEH HEH.
IT'S BEING A HERO, YOU KNOW? ALL THAT NICK OF TIME STUFF!


ONNNG


ART OF THE SHADOW DOPPLE-GANGER!!
FWUP
GOOD ONE, KID. MIND IF I JOIN IN?
FLIP


BUT A BLUFF SHOULD BE ENOUGH FOR THESE BOZOS!
FWUP


I CAN'T MANAGE ANYTHING SOLID WITH MY CHAKRA SO LOW.


YIPE!

ART OF THE SHADOW DOPPLE-GANGER!!

KAKASHI STYLE






NEVER MIND!!
TAK TAKTAKTAK
RUN AWAY!!!


YAY--!!
HOO-HOO!!!

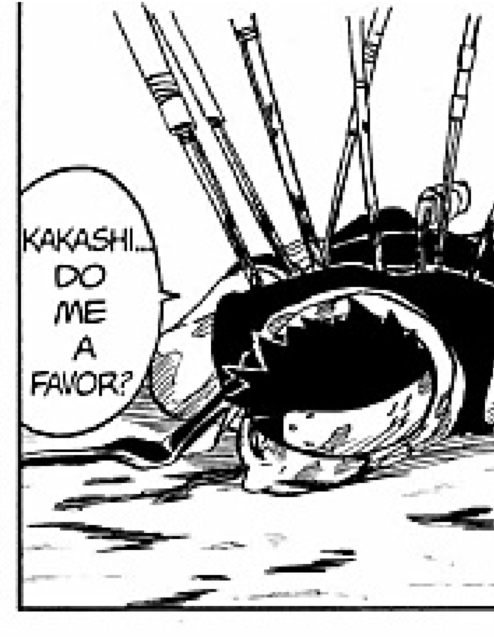



SPLASH
SPLASH
YAAGH--

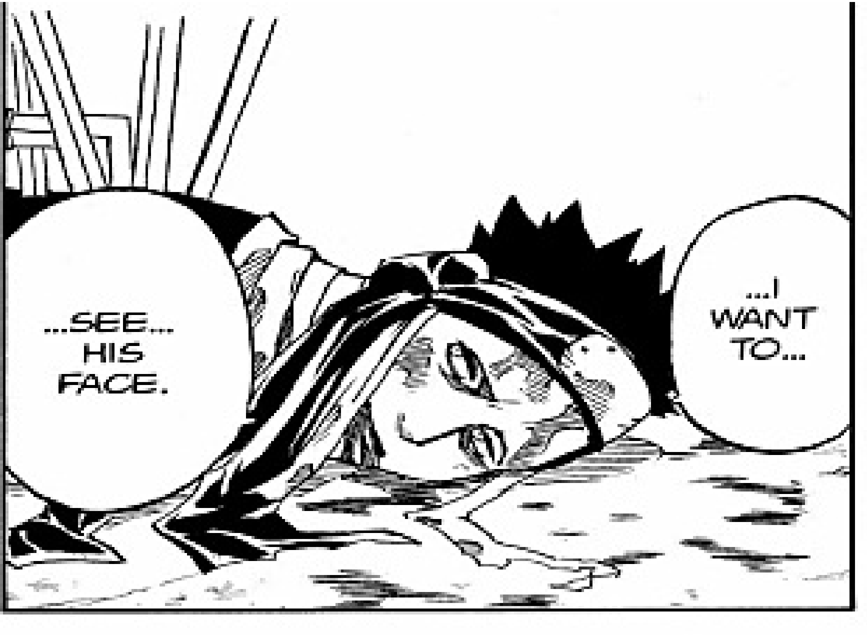

SKF

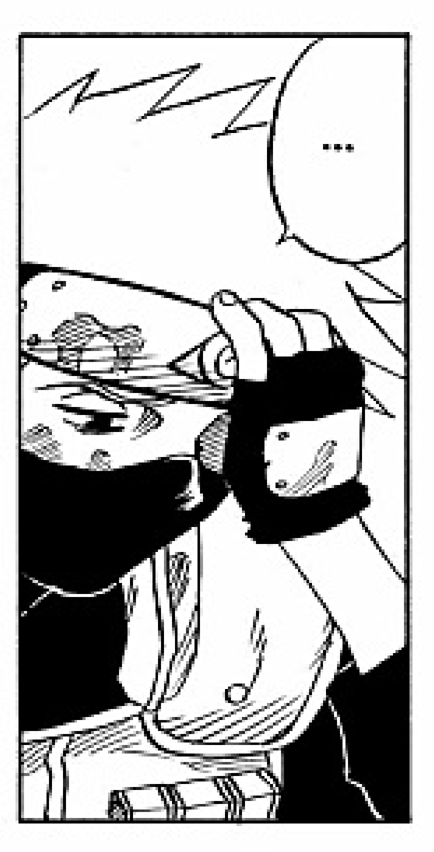

POOF
POOF
POOF


...LOOKS LIKE IT'S ALL OVER...
..EH, KAKASHI?
YEAH.


KAKASHI... DO ME A FAVOR?


WHAT IS IT?

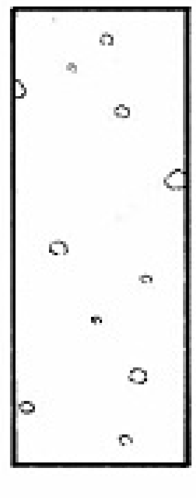

...I WANT TO...
...SEE... HIS FACE.


...

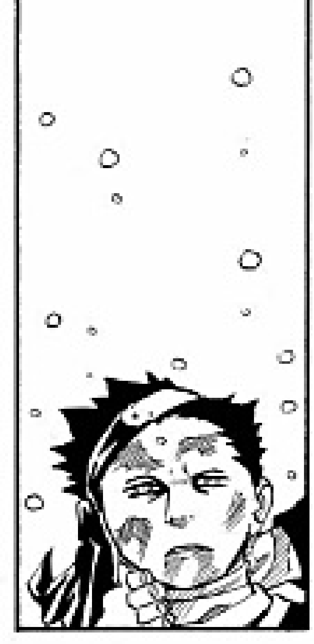

YANK
SURE.


GHA


HUH?




...
IT'S SNOWING.


ARE YOU CRYING?
MY DEAR HAKU...


IN THE MIDDLE OF SUMMER...?

YOU WERE AT MY SIDE RIGHT FROM THE START...
AND I'M AT YOURS, NOW, AT THE END...


...THANK YOU ... KAKASHI.

...IF I COULD... ...IF I WERE ABLE... I WOULD WANT TO GO... TO THE SAME PLACE... ON THE OTHER SIDE ...
...AS YOU.

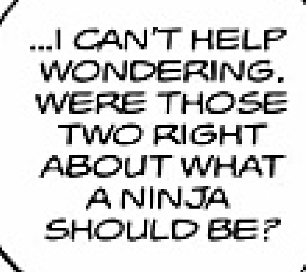

PLIT
...HE...WAS BORN IN A VILLAGE WHERE IT SNOWS A LOT...
SOB
I SEE...
HE WAS A PURE SPIRIT – AS TRUE AND CLEAN AS A NEWLY FALLEN SNOW.
YOU **CAN** GO WITH HIM, ZABUZA...
...GO TO **THAT** PLACE... TOGETHER.


WHACK
OWW!


GRAB


YOU EAT AN OFFERING, YOU'LL BE PUNISHED BY THE GODS!
HEH HEH
GRRR
WHAT SNEAKY, GREEDY TRICK ARE YOU UP TO NOW?


TWO WEEKS LATER


...I CAN'T HELP WONDERING. WERE THOSE TWO RIGHT ABOUT WHAT A NINJA SHOULD BE?

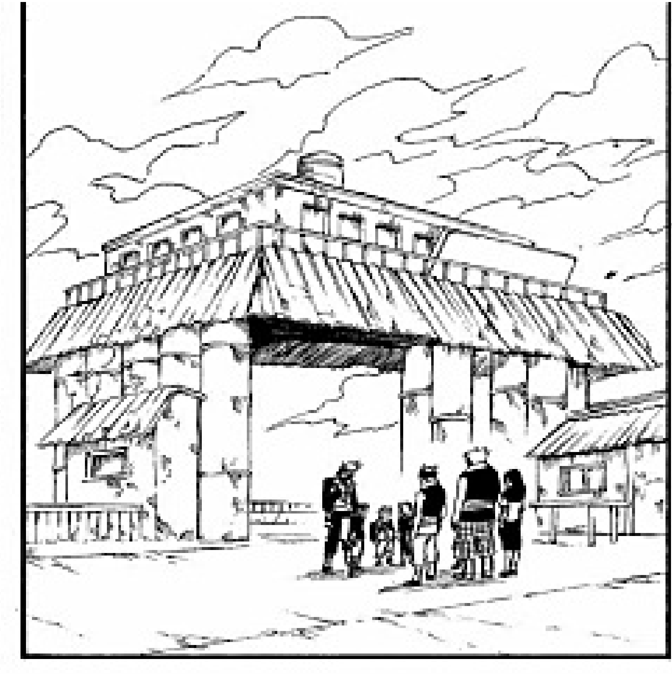

HMM~?

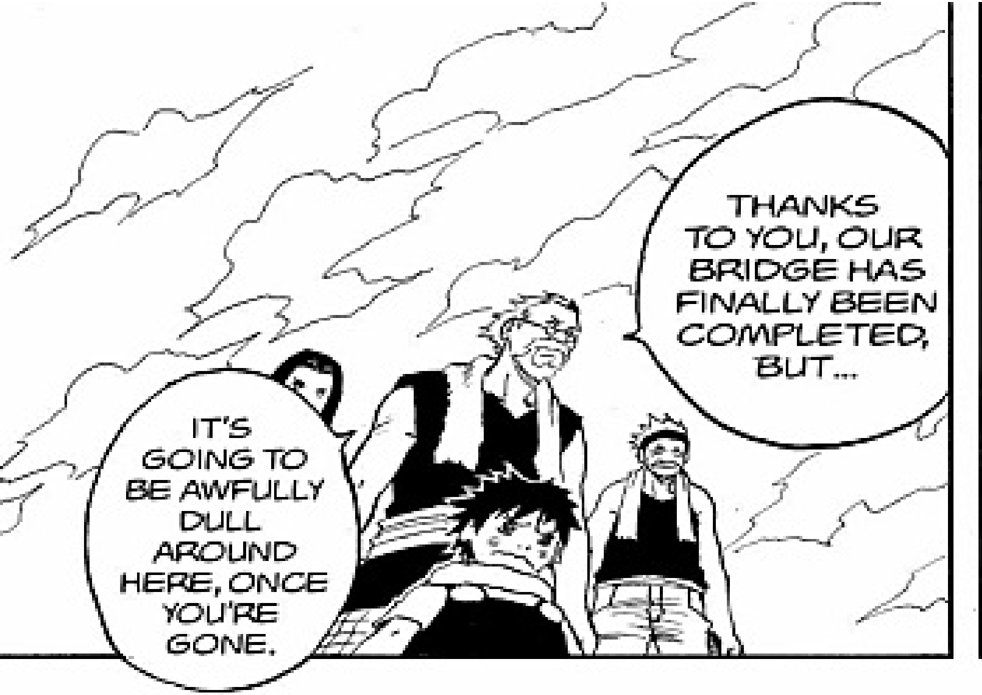

MASTER KAKASHI...
...
BUT STILL...


I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF IT!
IS THAT REALLY WHAT BECOMING A FULL-FLEDGED NINJA'S GONNA BE ABOUT?


THAT'S AS TRUE FOR US IN KONOHAGAKURE AS IT FOR NINJA ANYWHERE ELSE.
IT IS IMPORTANT MERELY THAT WE EXIST AS A TOOL FOR OUR HOMELAND TO USE IN WHATEVER WAY THEY NEED.
A *SHINOBI* SHOULDN'T BE CONCERNED WITH A REASON FOR HER OWN EXISTENCE...
...


AND THAT'S WHY ALL WE NINJA LIVE OUR LIVES WITH THAT IDEAL ALWAYS BUBBLING BENEATH THE SURFACE OF OUR MINDS, DISTURBING US.
...LIKE IT DID ZABUZA...
DO YOU REALLY FEEL THAT WAY, MASTER KAKASHI?
WELLL... NO.
...
AND THE BOY...
I AM GOING TO CREATE MY OWN *NINDO*— MY OWN NINJA PATH. MY OWN DESTINY!
THAT'S IT. I'VE MADE UP MY MIND!
!





THANKS TO YOU, OUR BRIDGE HAS FINALLY BEEN COMPLETED, BUT...
IT'S GOING TO BE AWFULLY DULL AROUND HERE, ONCE YOU'RE GONE.



WE'VE ENJOYED YOUR HOSPITALITY.
NO PROBLEMO, TAZUNA, MY MAN!! WE'LL COME BACK TO PLAY WITH YOU AGAIN SOMETIME!



PAT
YOU BETTER..
...AW...
TREMBLE



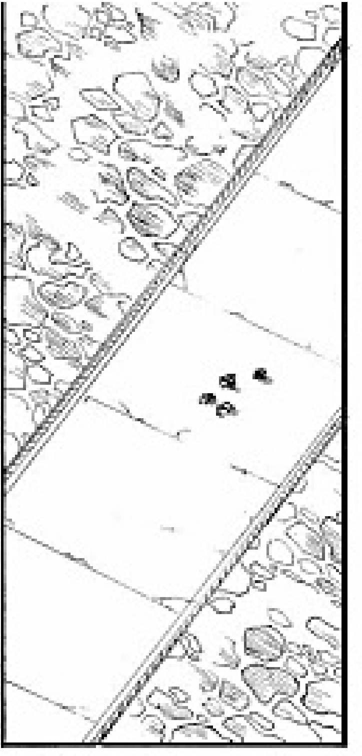
...
SO... UM.. ANYWAY...
B-BUT NARUTO... HEY, "BIG BROTHER" ... Y-YOU CAN CRY! GO AHEAD!
I'M NOT GONNA CRY!!
IT'S OKAY TO CRY, IF YOU REALLY WANT!
INARI... DON'T LET IT GET YOU DOWN.
...



ME? NO WAY.
FWUP
SEE YOU.



OH!



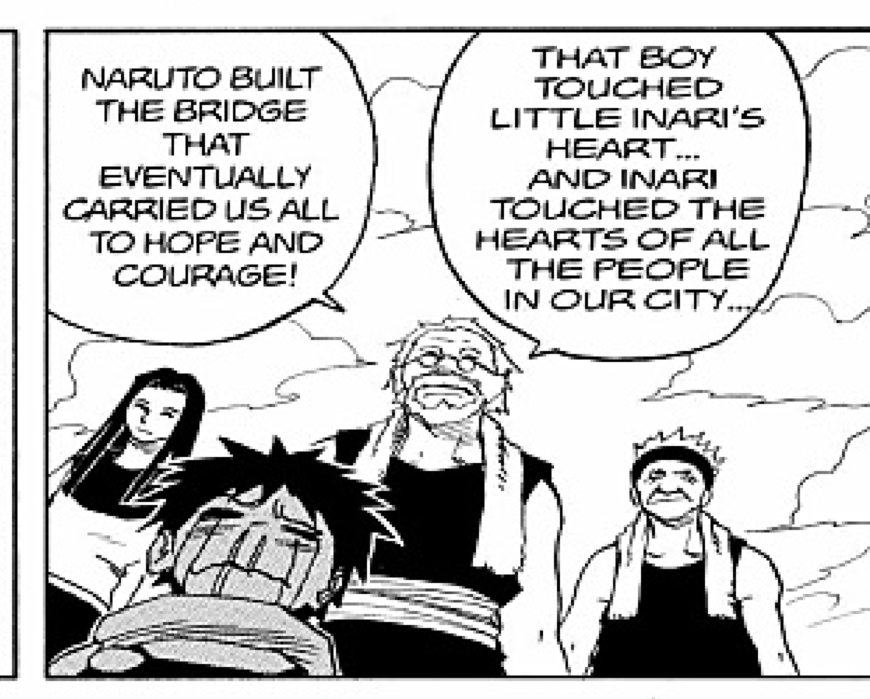


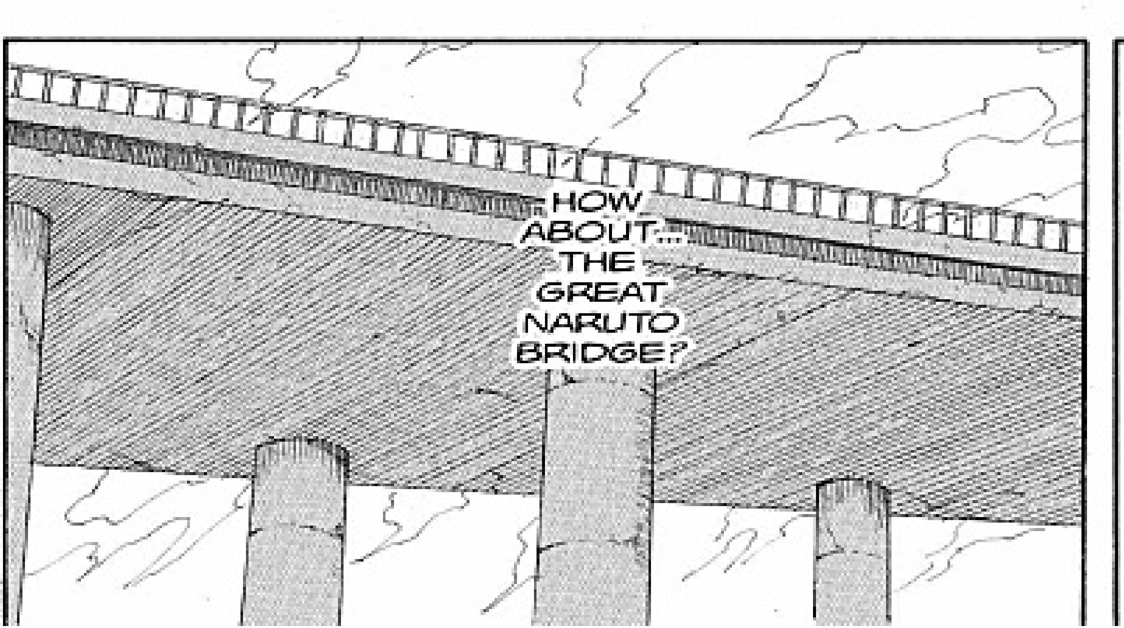
AND SPEAKING OF BRIDGES, WE STILL HAVE TO OFFICIALLY DEDICATE THIS ONE.

WHAT ARE GOING TO CALL IT?



AND THERE'S ONLY NAME THAT WILL TRULY FIT.







HEE HEE... IT'S A NICE NAME, DAD.

ALL RIGHT--! LET'S GET HOME. MASTER IRUKA'S GONNA TAKE ME OUT FOR RAMEN NOODLES TO CELEBRATE US ACCOMPLISHING OUR MISSION!

AND THEN... AND THEN, YOU KNOW, I HAVE TO TELL LITTLE KONOHAMARU MY EPIC TALE OF MARTIAL ARTS BRAVERY--!!

OH... UH... OKAY. BY THE WAY, SASUKE... WHEN WE DO GET HOME... WOULD YOU LIKE TO... GO OUT WITH ME?

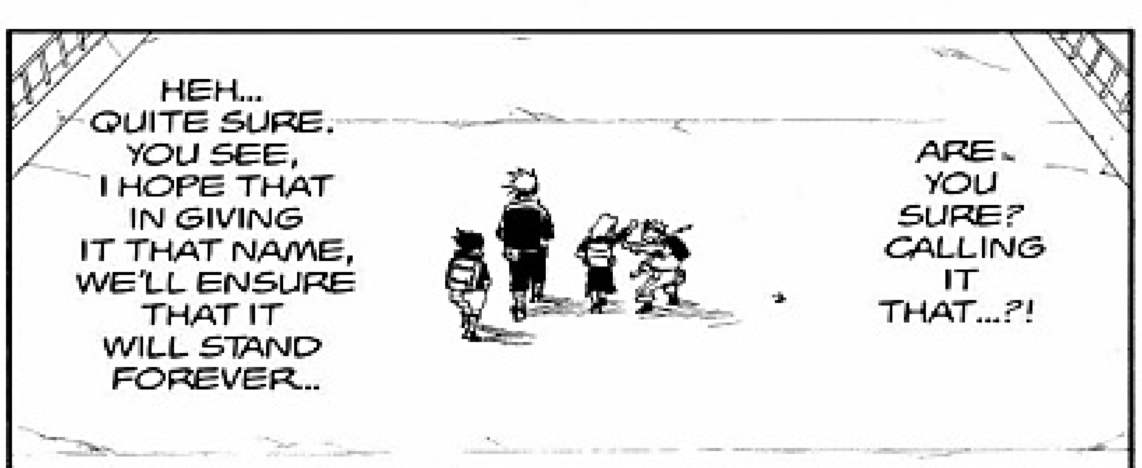
UH, NO. THANKS.

N-NO...?...

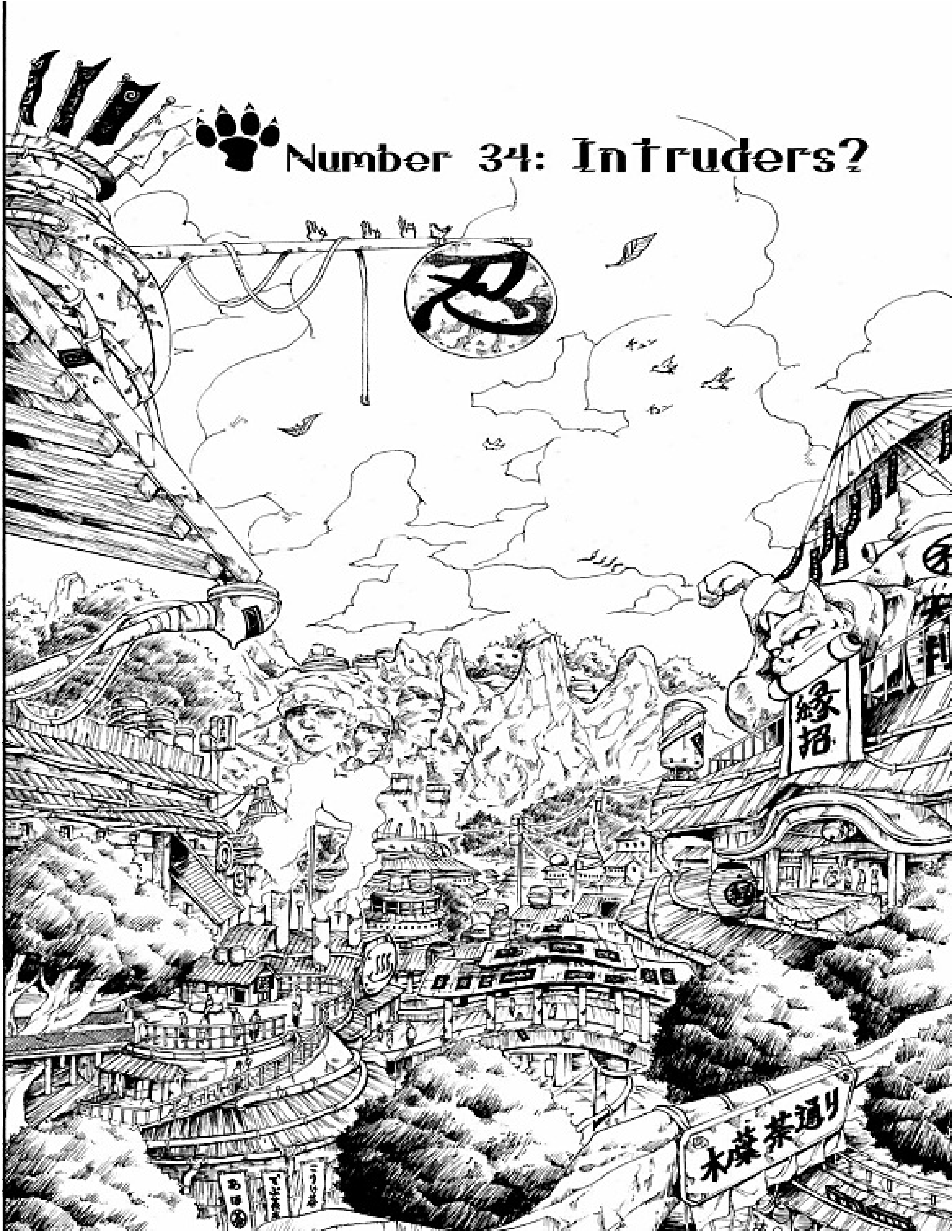
HEY! I'LL GO OUT WITH YOU!

NARUTO! NO! KNOCK IT OFF!





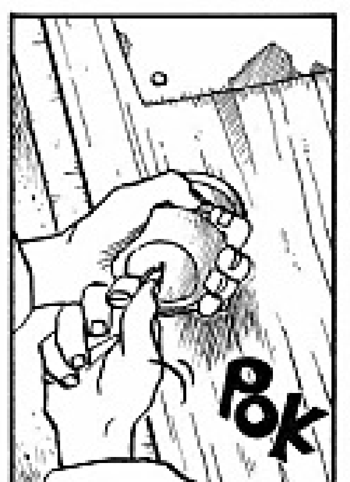



Number 34: Intruders?
縁招
木葉茶通り


MILK
RAMEN
PAK PAK


YAAAAAWN

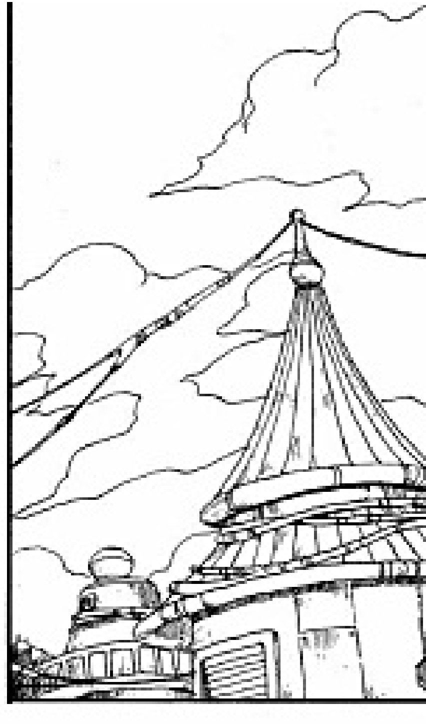

HEH

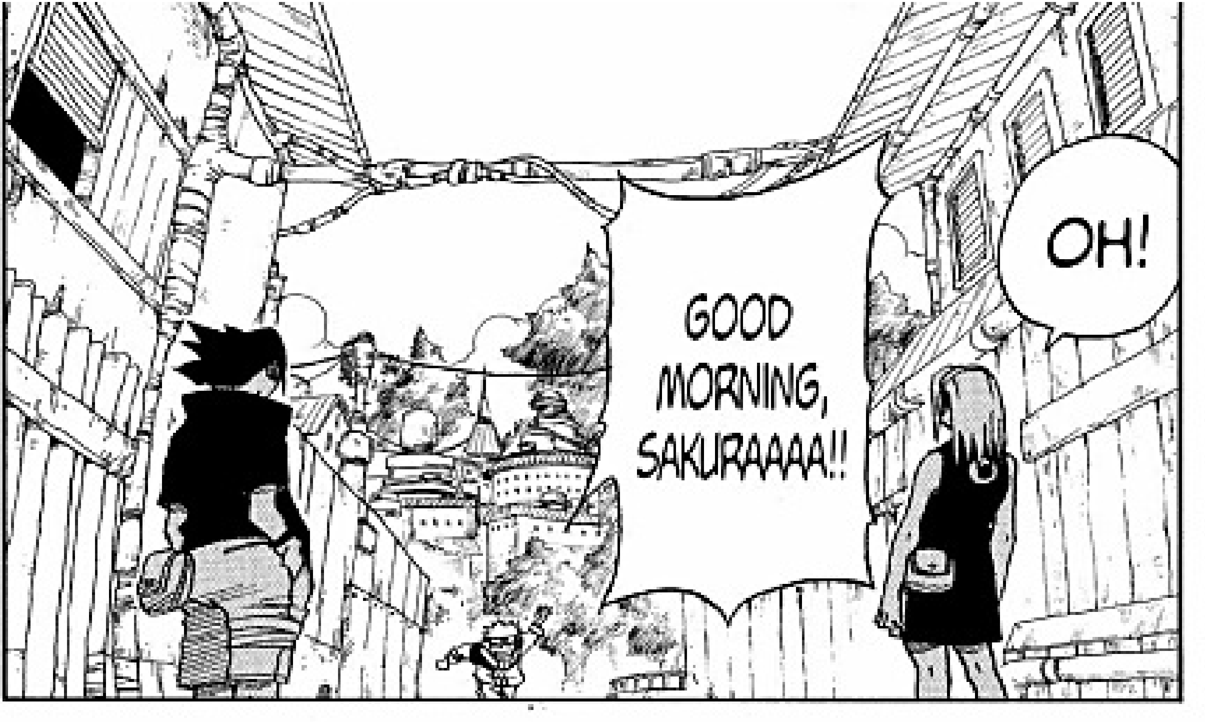

POK


GLUG GLUG

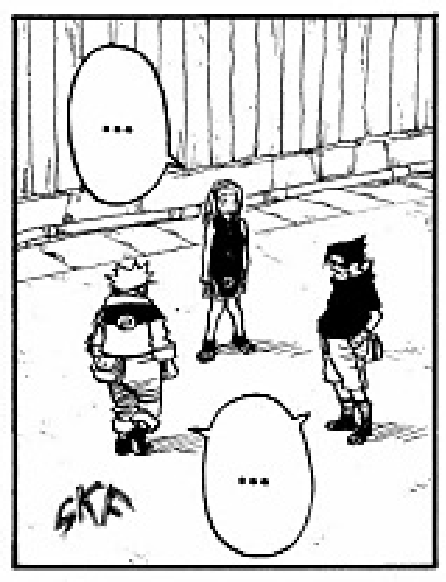

MUNCH MUNCH

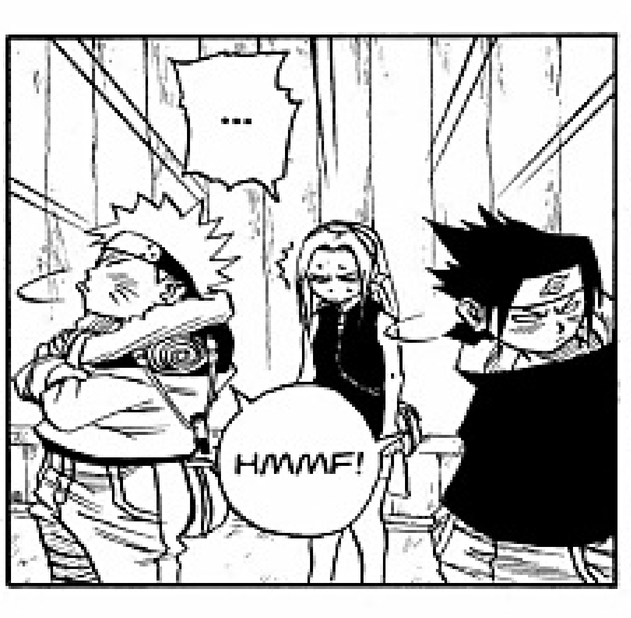

START YOUR ENGINES!! MACH 5!!
TAK
WOO-HOO! NO MATTER WHAT TODAY'S MISSION IS, I'LL HAVE THE ENERGY TO FACE IT NOW!

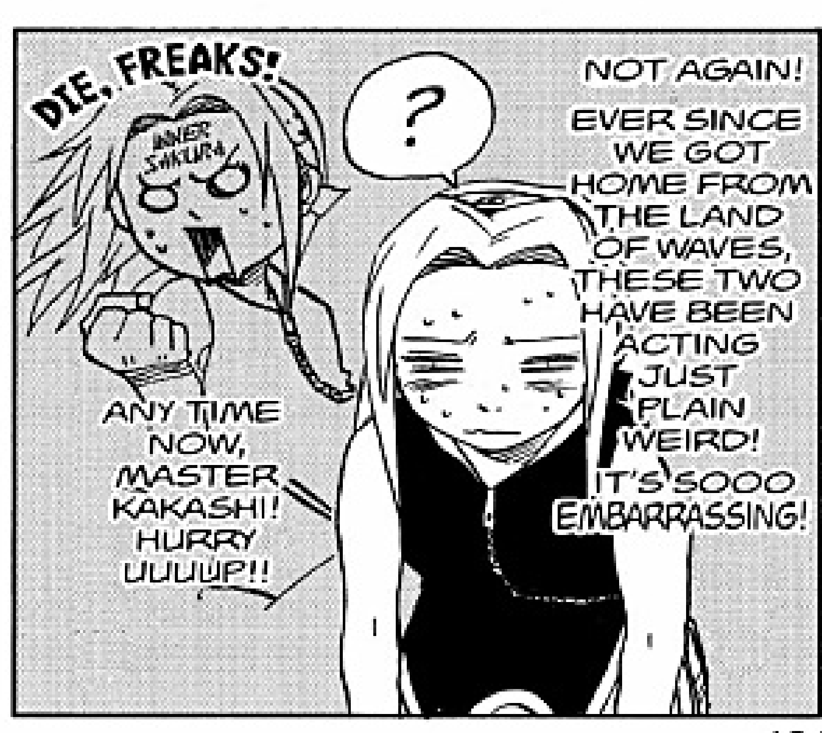



OH!
GOOD MORNING, SAKURAAAA!!


!
SKID
!


...
...
SKA


...
HMMF!


NOT AGAIN!
EVER SINCE WE GOT HOME FROM THE LAND OF WAVES, THESE TWO HAVE BEEN ACTING JUST PLAIN WEIRD!
IT'S SOOO EMBARRASSING!
?
DIE, FREAKS!
INNER SAKURA
ANY TIME NOW, MASTER KAKASHI! HURRY UUUUP!!

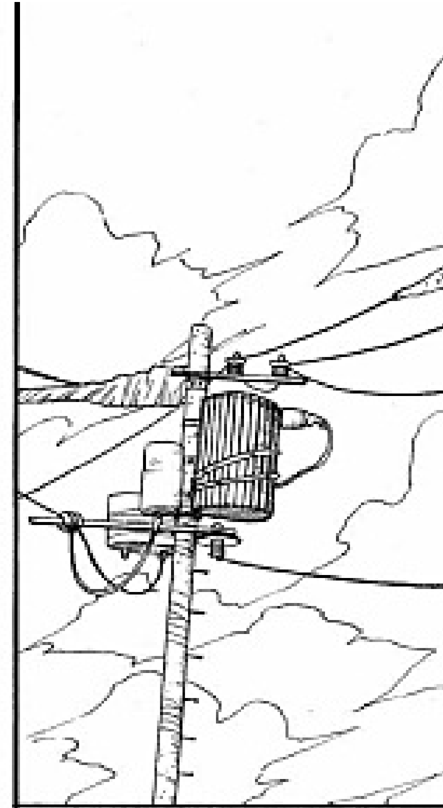



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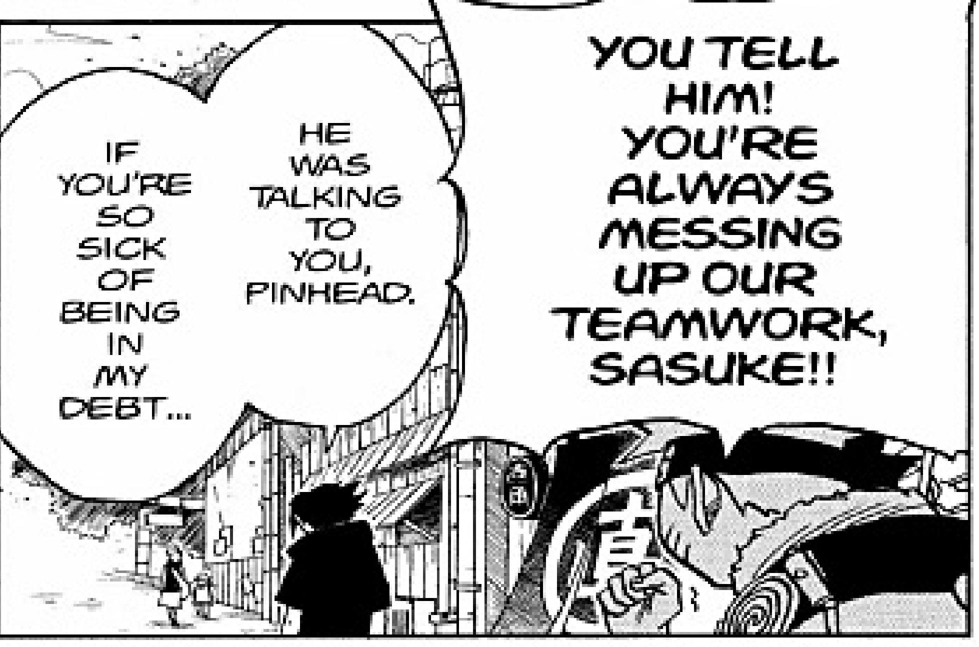
THREE HOURS LATER...
GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE.
I'M AFRAID I GOT LOST ON THE WAY HERE...
YOUR NOSE IS GROWING, MASTER!!!
YOU ALWAYS LAY IT ON TOO THICK.
AS NINJA DECEPTIONS GO... THAT ONE SUCKS!
HEY, MASTER KAKASHI! ANY HOT NEW MISSIONS FOR THE 7TH CELL? WE'VE HAD NOTHING BUT GIMMES! BORRRRING!
SIZZLE
WE WANT ACTION! A CHALLENGE! SOMETHING WHERE I COULD USE MY SKILL -LIKE THIS... AND THIS... AND - AND -
OH, REALLY?
I SEE WHERE YOU'RE GOING WITH THIS...
EVERY TIME WE GO ON A MISSION, THEY END UP SHOWING ME UP AND SAVING ME. BUT NOT THIS TIME!
GRR... THOSE TWO...
DOPE.
SKA
IT'S OVER, AS OF NOW!
SAVING YOU IS SUCH A NUISANCE, SASUKE!
WHEW
GASP!
PUFF
PUFF
TAK
THAT'S WHAT I'LL TELL 'IM!!
HEY, NARUTO! WAKE UP! WE'RE HEADING OUT ON OUR MISSION!
YESSIR!
WOULD YOU CHILL?!

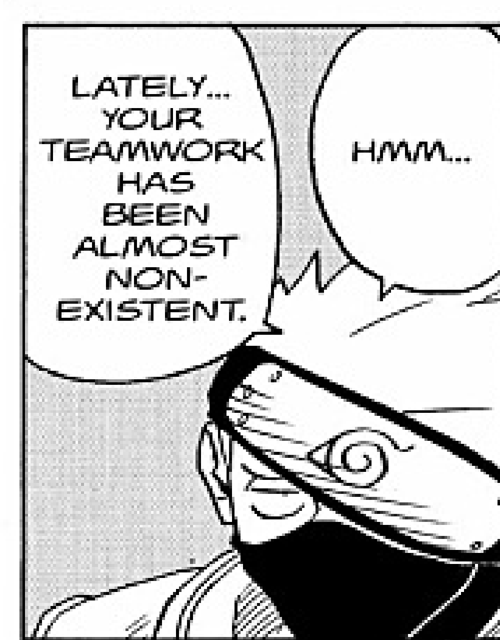

OPENS TODAY
MAKE-OUT PARADISE
YOU'RE A REAL NUISANCE.
YOU'D HAVE BEEN FINE IF YOU HADN'T OVERDONE IT.
AND AT THE MISSION'S END...
SIGH...



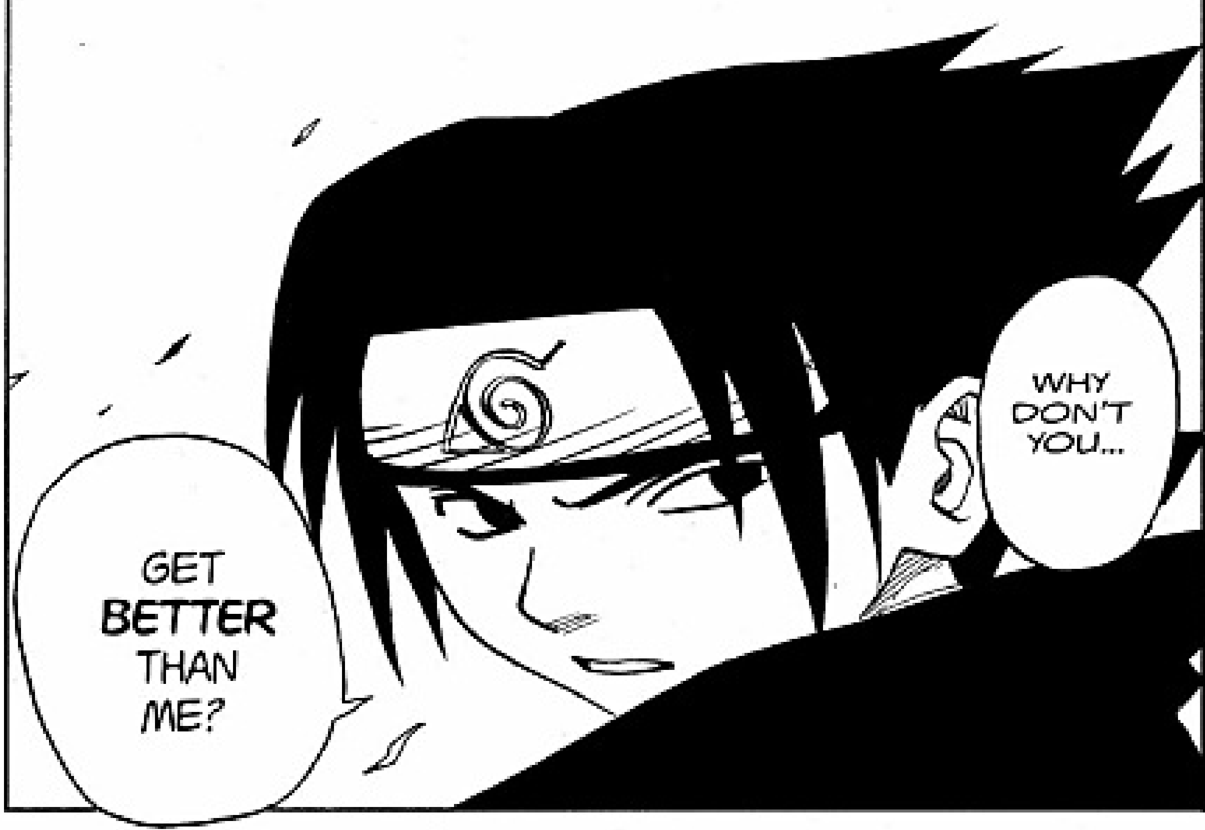

HAH!
...
IF YOU START ANYTHING MORE, I'LL BURY YOU!
THAT DOES IT!! SASUKE-


!
SNAP
FLINCH

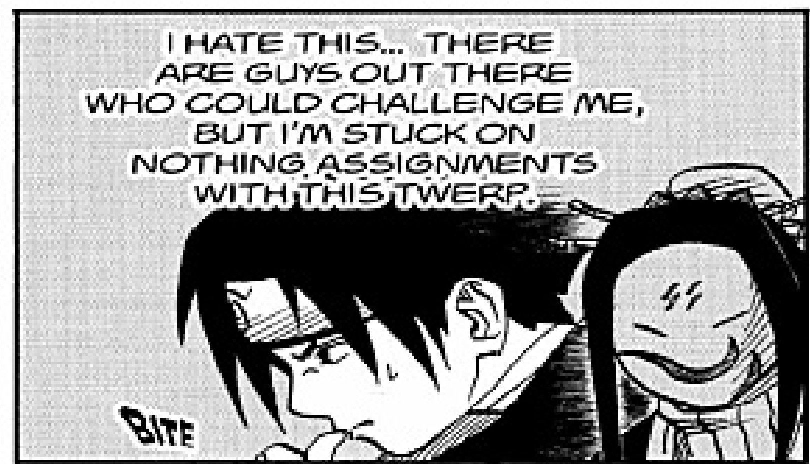

IF YOU'RE SO SICK OF BEING IN MY DEBT...
HE WAS TALKING TO YOU, PINHEAD.
YOU TELL HIM! YOU'RE ALWAYS MESSING UP OUR TEAMWORK, SASUKE!!


LATELY... YOUR TEAMWORK HAS BEEN ALMOST NON-EXISTENT.
HMM...


!!


WHY DON'T YOU...
GET BETTER THAN ME?

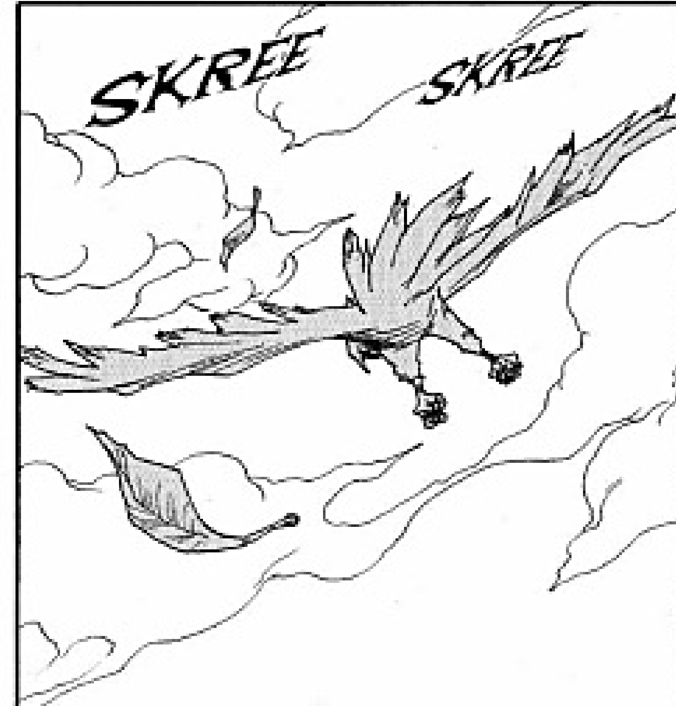


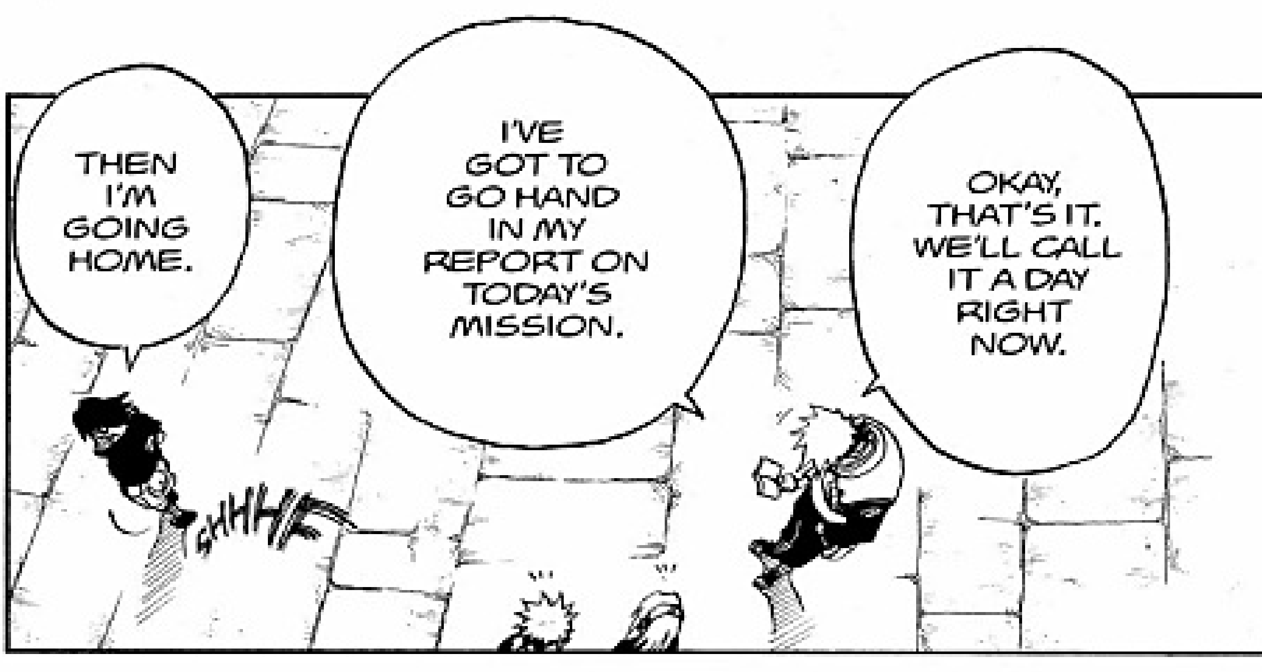

I HATE THIS... THERE ARE GUYS OUT THERE WHO COULD CHALLENGE ME, BUT I'M STUCK ON NOTHING ASSIGNMENTS WITH THIS TWERP.
BITE

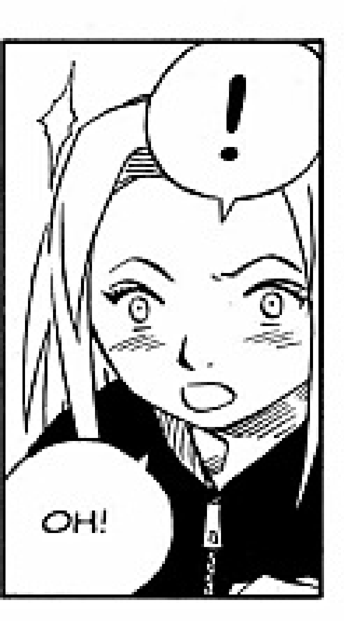

I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY MANAGED IT, BUT THEY'RE ON EVEN WORSE TERMS NOW THAN THEY WERE BEFORE.


!
BOP
FLIP



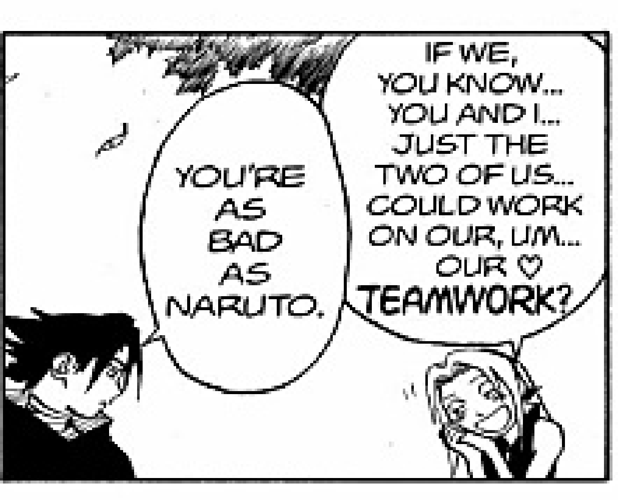

SKREE
SKREE


OKAY, THAT'S IT. WE'LL CALL IT A DAY RIGHT NOW.
I'VE GOT TO GO HAND IN MY REPORT ON TODAY'S MISSION.
THEN I'M GOING HOME.
SHHHF


!
OH!

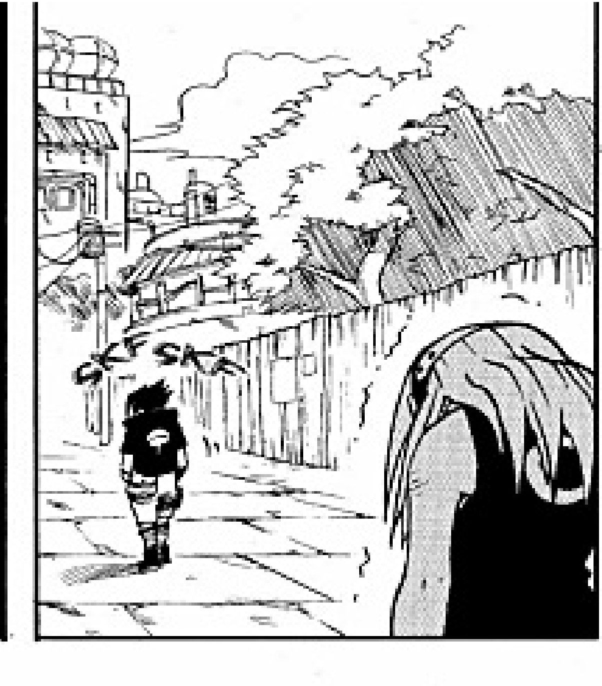

HEY! SASUKE, WAIT UP!
...
I... I WAS WONDERING... IF... ♡


AW, MAN!!!


IF WE, YOU KNOW... YOU AND I... JUST THE TWO OF US... COULD WORK ON OUR, UM... OUR ♡ TEAMWORK?
YOU'RE AS BAD AS NARUTO.


WHY WASTE YOUR TIME FLIRTING WHEN YOU SHOULD BE PRACTICING?
LIKE NARUTO!
INNER SAKURA
THUNK


EVEN HIS SKILLS ARE BETTER THAN YOURS!
WORSE THAN NARUTO!
NO WAY!!!
INNER SAKURA
THUNK
THUD




HE'S RIGHT... IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT OUR MISSION IS. THEY'RE ALL THE SAME TO ME...
'CAUSE I'M ALWAYS THE WEAKEST... THE ONE WITH ALMOST NO SPECIAL SKILLS!

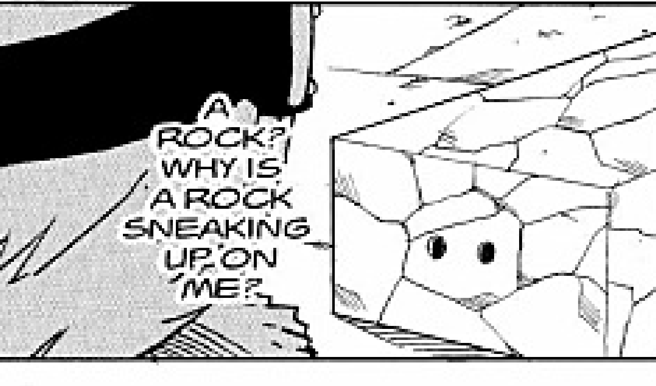

HEY, HOT STUFF! FORGET SASUKE. YOU AND I CAN TRAIN TOGETHER!


FWOOM


HUH?
WHERE'D MASTER KAKASHI GO? IS HE GIVING US SOME ALONE TIME?


WHATEVER! WHAT MATTERS IS, I'M DONE LOSING! THERE'S ONLY ONE THING AHEAD OF ME, AND THAT'S... TRAINING!
SNEAK
SNEAK


HUH?!
STOP!

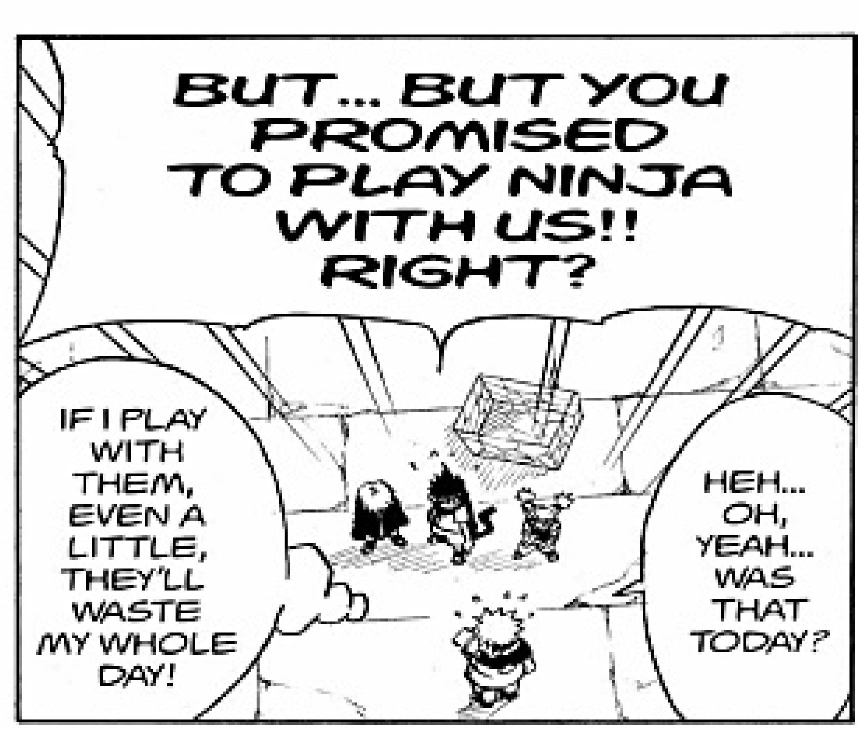

A ROCK? WHY IS A ROCK SNEAKING UP ON ME?




PSYCH!! FAKED YOU OUT, ROCK!!!
FWP
YIPE
OW!
LITTLE HINT... NO ROCK HAS PERFECT ANGLES, PERFECT CORNERS... AND EYE HOLES.
KIND OF A BIG CLUE.
OOF
GRUNT
...
TA-DAAAA
LEAVE IT TO THE MAN I HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED AS BEING ALMOST MY EQUAL! YOUR SKILLS RIVAL MY OWN!!
OH, IT'S YOU GUYS.
UHHH...
WHAT'S UP WITH THE GOGGLES?
HEH HEH HEH
YOU'RE OUR IDOL, RIGHT? WE'RE COPYING THE STYLE YOU USED TO WEAR.


WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
WE'LL SHOW YOU, BOSS! CAN YOU COME NOW?
HE'S LOOKING DOWN ON US!

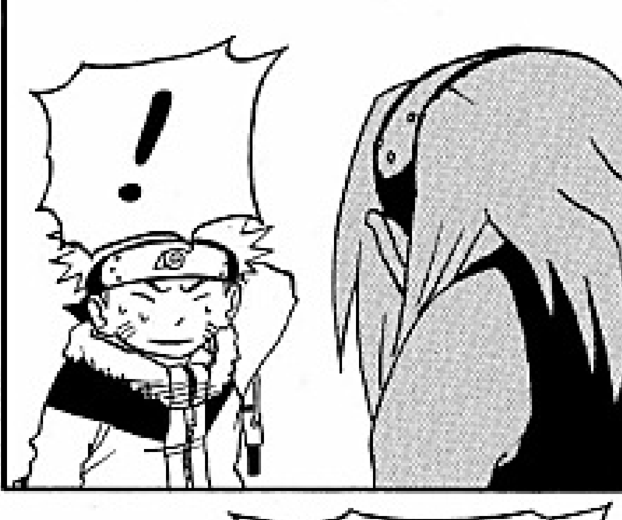
OH-KAAAAAY...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "OKAY?"
SUDDENLY TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL, BIG GUY?
!

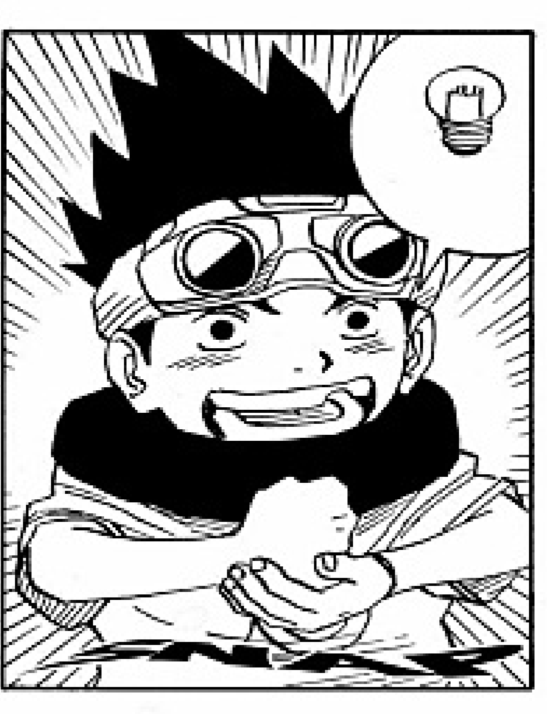
NOPE!
I HAVE TO TRAIN!
FWUP

BUT... BUT YOU PROMISED TO PLAY NINJA WITH US!! RIGHT?
HEH... OH, YEAH... WAS THAT TODAY?
IF I PLAY WITH THEM, EVEN A LITTLE, THEY'LL WASTE MY WHOLE DAY!

SO... JUST WHAT IS A NINJA DOING "PLAYING NINJA", HMM?
DUM DUM DOM
TAK TAK
...


UH, YES? CAN WE HELP YOU?
BUT WHO AM I TO TALK? I'M WORSE THAN HE IS!


GRR


!




THAT CHICK'S EYING HIM LIKE SHE'D LIKE TO KILL HIM AND DEVOUR HIS CORPSE!


HEY, BIG GUY, WHO'S THE BABE?
THE WAY SHE'S LOOKING AT ME... STOP! I'M BLUSHING!!


!!
JINK
...YOU KNOWWWW! RIGHT?


THE HOTTIE... I CAN TELL... YOU AND SHE ARE......
HUNH?
HEY, BIG GUY, SEEING AS HOW YOU'RE SO SMART AND SUAVE AND ALL...
BOFF

POW

WRONG!!

HEH HEH HEH

FOR LITTLE GUYS, YOU CATCH ON QUICK.

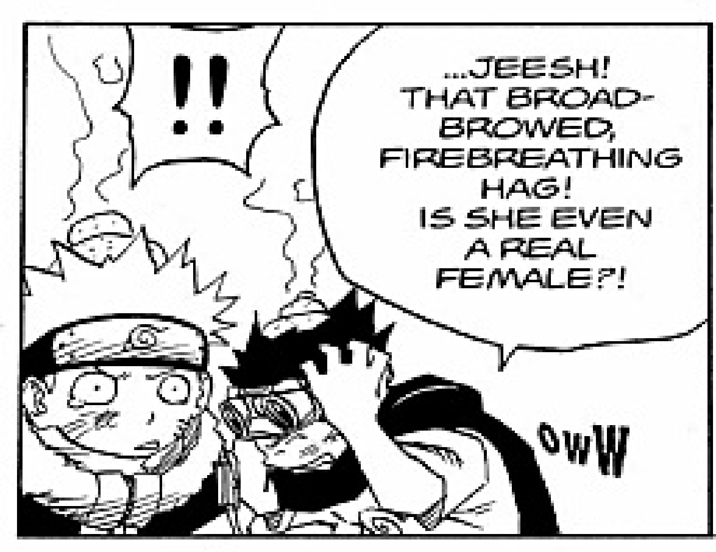


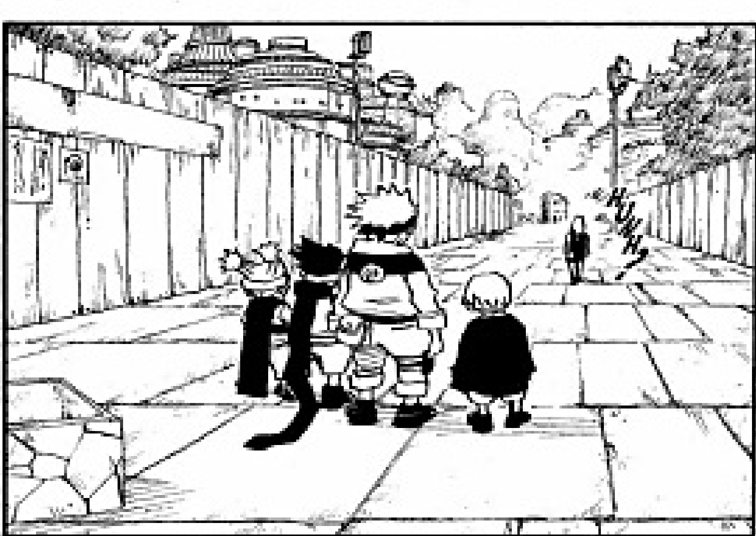





THANKS FOR YOUR LATEST REPORT, MASTER KAKASHI.
...
HOW'S OUR LITTLE HELLION?
DOES HE GET ALONG WELL WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS CELL?
HE'S... GETTING THERE.
YOUR TEAM'S SEEN A LOT OF ACTION LATELY.
NARUTO HASN'T HAD TIME TO GET TOGETHER WITH ME ONCE. I CAN'T HELP WORRYING ABOUT HIM.
YOU KNOW HOW IT IS, MASTER IRUKA. UCHIHA SASUKE IS IN OUR CELL, TOO. HE AND NARUTO ARE LIKE A COUPLE OF DOGS, ALWAYS CIRCLING EACH OTHER, SNAPPING AND SNARLING.
BUT IT KEEPS NARUTO ON HIS TOES. HE'S DEVELOPING FAST. HE'S ALWAYS HOPING TO CATCH UP TO HIS HERO... **YOU.**
...!
REALLY?


HMF
STOMP
STOMP
Sigh
KONOHA-MARU! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?


!!
...JEESH! THAT BROAD-BROWED, FIREBREATHING HAG! IS SHE EVEN A REAL FEMALE?!
OWW




RUUUUUN
S
ARRRRRGH!!


POW


YIPE!

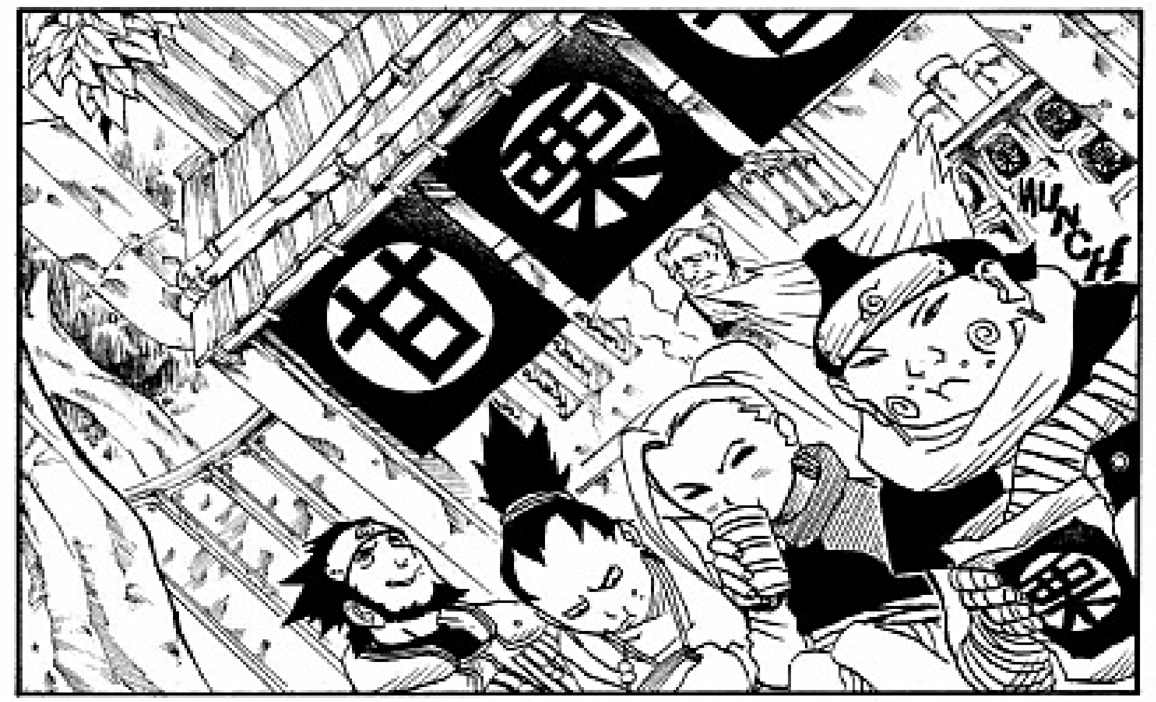

OOOONG
THAT'S GOTTA SMART!
!!


TUHTWEEEET


NOW WHAT?

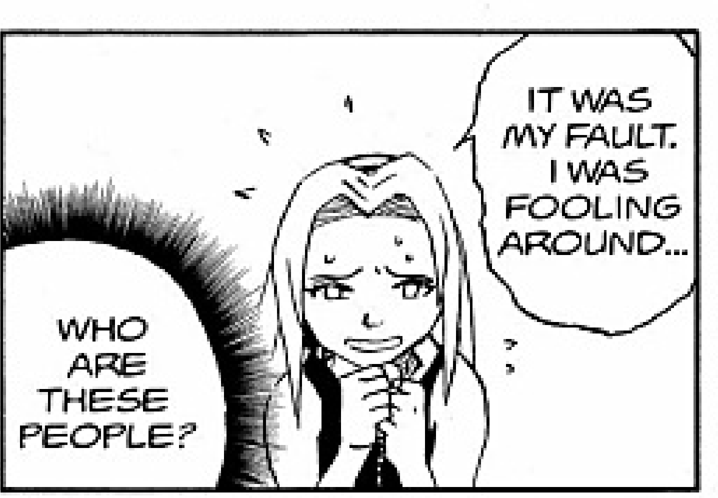

!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

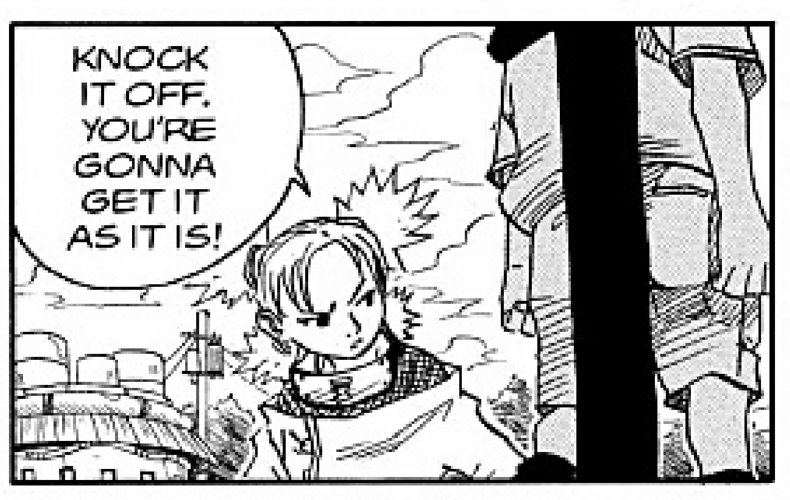

NOW'S THE TIME!

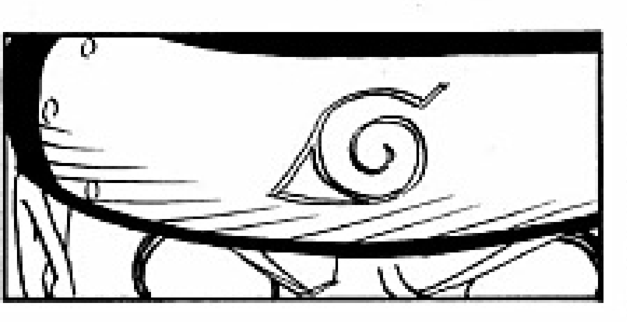

MUNCH


UNNH..
THAT HURT, SNOTFACE!


KONOHA-MARU!!


IT WAS MY FAULT. I WAS FOOLING AROUND...
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?


KNOCK IT OFF. YOU'RE GONNA GET IT AS IT IS!

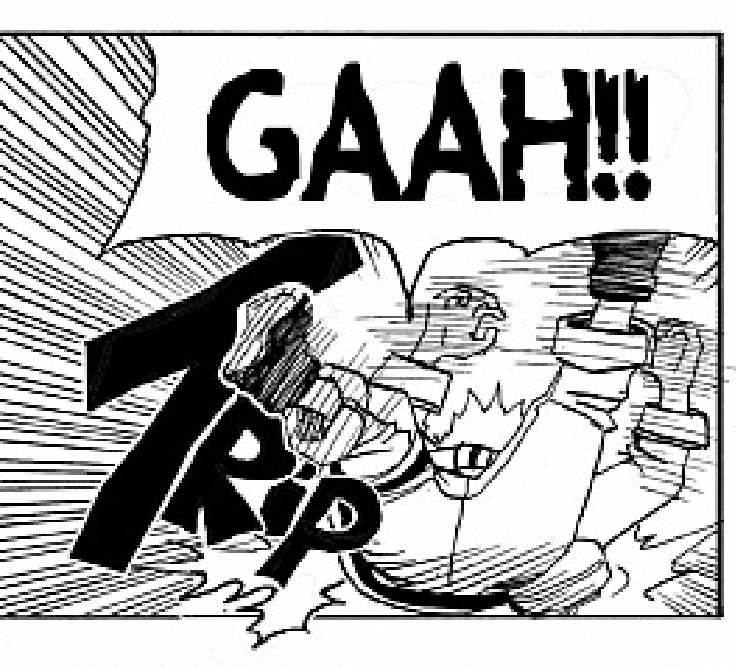



THESE GUYS MUST BE GENIN - JUNIOR-LEVEL NINJA - FROM KONOHA VILLAGE!


PUT HIM DOWN, YOU BIG APE!!


YOU SONOFA-


I JUST WANT TO PLAY WITH HIM A LITTLE... WHILE WE'RE WAITING FOR THE NUISANCE TO GET HERE!
OWW!
KRUNCH


GAAH!!
TRIP

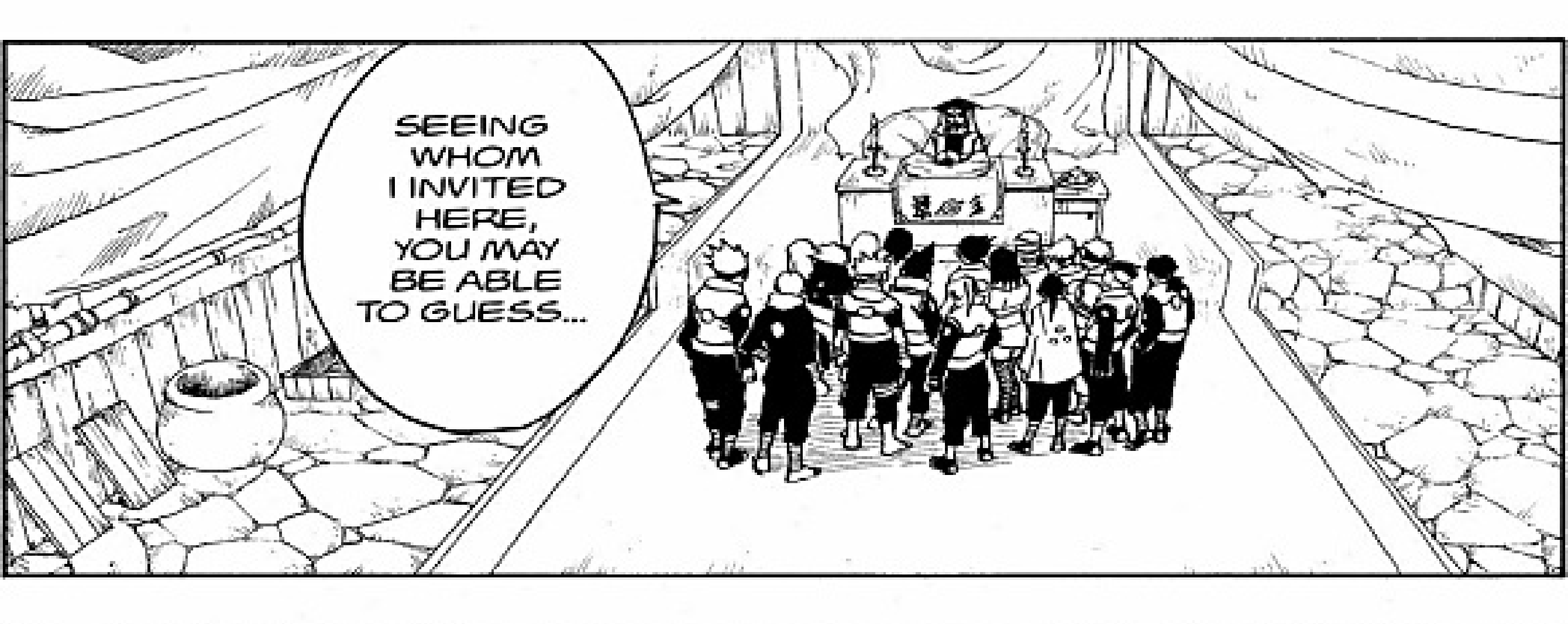

GRRR
FLYP


ZOOOM


TH-THEY'RE FOREIGNERS!
WHY ARE THEY HERE?


WHAT A WIMP!
IS THAT THE BEST KONOHA'S *GENIN* CAN DO?!


?
WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT?!



SEEING WHOM I INVITED HERE, YOU MAY BE ABLE TO GUESS...



...WHAT WE ARE HERE TO DISCUSS.



IS IT TIME ALREADY?
HAVE YOU INFORMED THE LORDS OF THE OTHER LANDS YET?
BECAUSE I BELIEVE I HAVE ALREADY SEEN SOME OF THEM IN OUR VILLAGE.
WHEN IS IT TO BE?



ONE WEEK FROM TODAY.
ISN'T THIS RATHER SUDDEN?



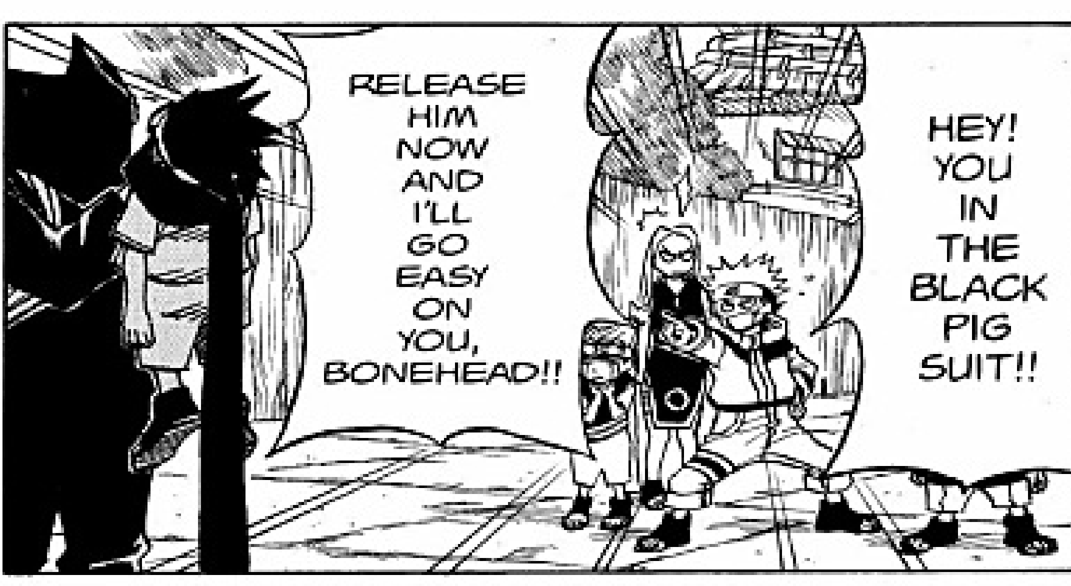
HUMF



TO MAKE IT COMPLETELY OFFICIAL, I HEREBY ANNOUNCE...
SEVEN DAYS FROM NOW, ON JULY 1ST...
WE SHALL BEGIN CONDUCTING EXAMINATIONS FOR JOURNEYMEN NINJA - THE *CHŪNIN.*


Number 35:
Iruka vs. Kakashi

KONOHA-
MARU!!
KONOHA-
MARU!!


HEY! YOU IN THE BLACK PIG SUIT!!
RELEASE HIM NOW AND I'LL GO EASY ON YOU, BONEHEAD!!


...


YOU'RE STARTING TO ANNOY ME!
!


YOU'RE THE BONEHEAD!
CHOKE
DO YOU WANT THAT GUY TO KICK URANUS?!
GACK!!


!!
WHAT?!




GASP
GUK
FIRST OFF, I'M ALLERGIC TO "SHRIMP"!
BAD ENOUGH THAT YOU'RE A SHORT LITTLE KID... YOU'RE DISRESPECTING YOUR ELDERS! YOU MAKE ME WANT TO KILL HIM!


I... WILL NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS...
!!


SHHK
CRUNCH
SO I'LL FINISH WITH THIS TINY SHRIMP... AND MOVE ON TO THE JUMBO SHRIMP OVER THERE.


WHO IS HE? THIS IS SO NOT GOOD!
YOU-


FWIP


YOU... YOU...

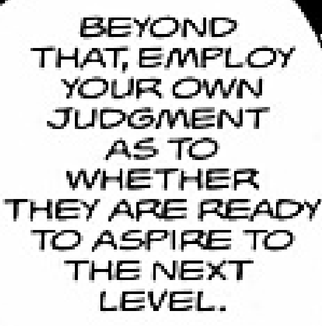

THWIP



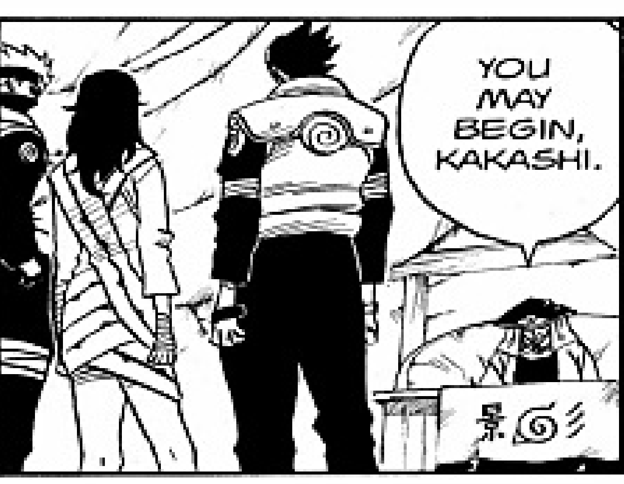
THOK
THO
AAGH!
UGH!
TELL ME... WHAT ARE YOU GUYS DOING IN OUR VILLAGE?
IT'S SASUKE !!
SO?
HMM... PRETTY COOL!



NOW, THEN...
WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FIRST FROM THOSE WHO HAVE OVERSEEN THE TRAINING OF OUR NEWEST JUNIOR NINJA.
TAK
MASTERS KAKASHI, KURENAI, AND ASUMA.
TELL US...
...DO ANY OF YOU HAVE, AMONG YOUR CHARGES, ANY *GENIN* YOU'D RECOMMEND FOR THIS YEAR'S JOURNEYMEN EXAMS?



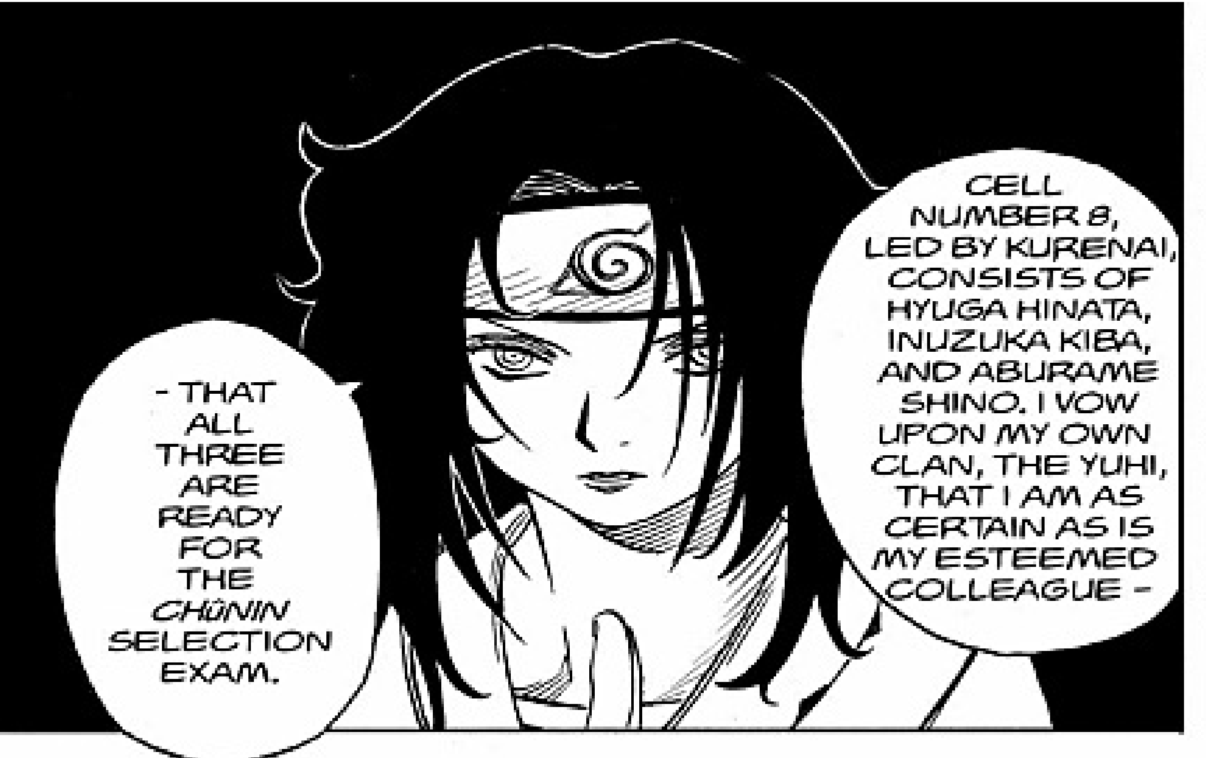
BEYOND THAT, EMPLOY YOUR OWN JUDGMENT AS TO WHETHER THEY ARE READY TO ASPIRE TO THE NEXT LEVEL.
THEY MUST HAVE COMPLETED A MINIMUM OF EIGHT MISSIONS.
...THAT BEFORE WE CAN EVEN CONSIDER THEM,


YOU MAY BEGIN, KAKASHI.

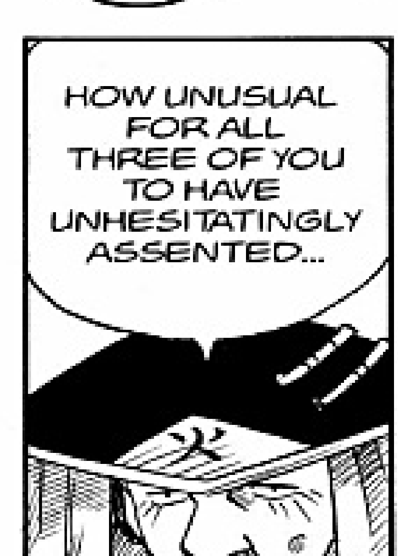

HE SHOULDN'T BE ASKING THIS YET... IT'S TOO SOON FOR **ANY** OF THEM.
TO BE TRULY COMPETITIVE, CANDIDATES SHOULD PROBABLY HAVE COMPLETED AT LEAST DOUBLE THE RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF MISSIONS...

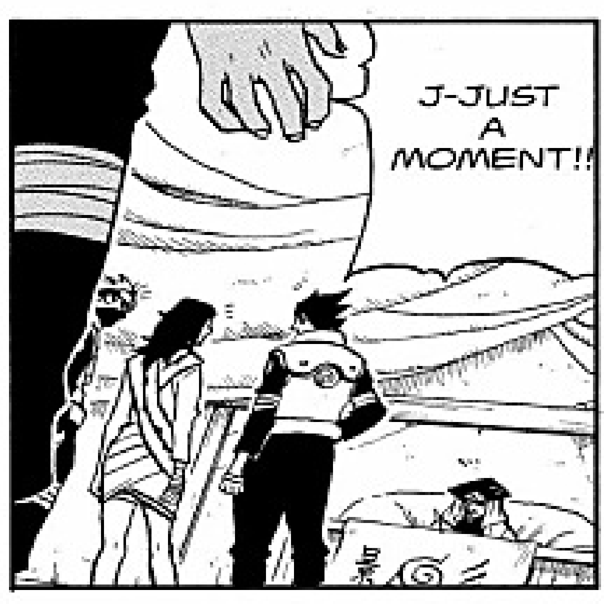
CELL NUMBER 7, LED BY KAKASHI, CONSISTS OF UCHIHA SASUKE, UZUMAKI NARUTO, AND HARUNO SAKURA. I VOW UPON THE HONOR OF MY CLAN, THE HATAKE –
– THAT ALL THREE OF THEM ARE READY FOR THE *CHŪNIN* SELECTION EXAM.

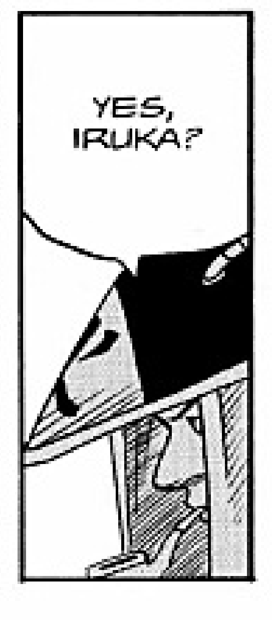

WHAT?!


CELL NUMBER 8, LED BY KURENAI, CONSISTS OF HYUGA HINATA, INUZUKA KIBA, AND ABURAME SHINO. I VOW UPON MY OWN CLAN, THE YUHI, THAT I AM AS CERTAIN AS IS MY ESTEEMED COLLEAGUE -
- THAT ALL THREE ARE READY FOR THE *CHŪNIN* SELECTION EXAM.


CELL NUMBER 10, LED BY ASUMA, CONSISTS OF YAMANAKA INO, NARA SHIKAMARU, AND AKIMICHI CHOJI. I VOW UPON MY CLAN, THE SARUTOBI, THAT I AM EQUALLY AS CERTAIN -
- THAT ALL THREE ARE READY FOR THE *CHŪNIN* SELECTION EXAM.


HOW UNUSUAL FOR ALL THREE OF YOU TO HAVE UNHESITATINGLY ASSENTED...


J-JUST A MOMENT!!

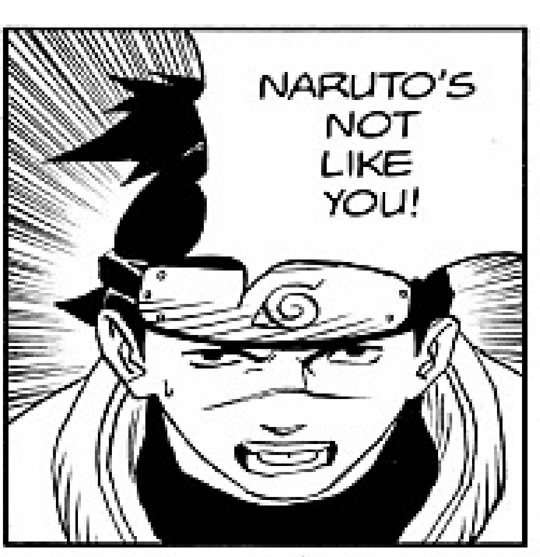

YES, IRUKA?

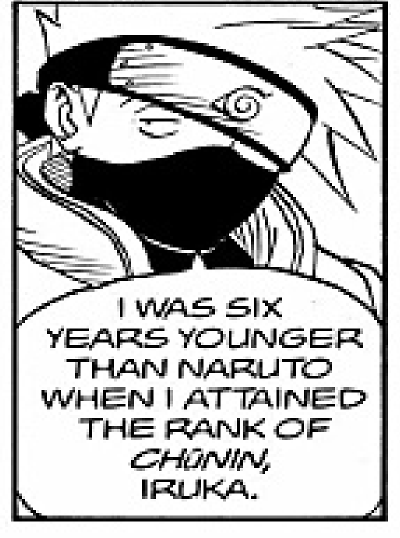

LORD HOKAGE!
PLEASE ALLOW ME TO SPEAK!!

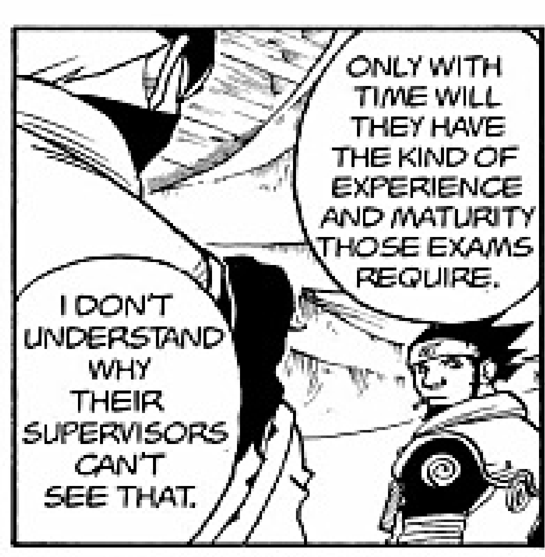
CERTAINLY, THEY ARE ALL GIFTED AND SHOW BOTH COMMITMENT AND TALENT... BUT IT'S TOO SOON FOR KIDS THAT YOUNG TO BE STEPPING UP TO THE JOURNEYMAN LEVEL.

FORGIVE ME IF I OVERSTEP, BUT MOST OF THE NINE STUDENTS JUST NAMED...

... WERE MY STUDENTS WHILE THEY WERE AT THE ACADEMY.











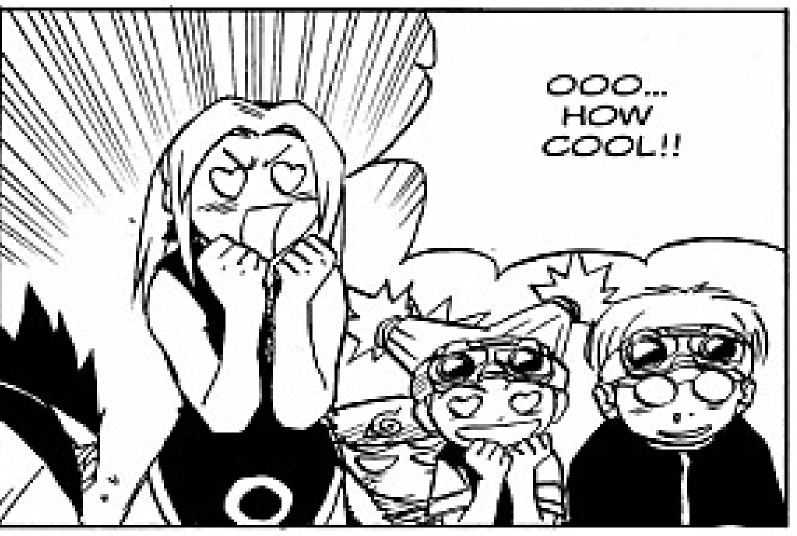

BUT...
I UNDERSTAND YOU... AND I'M SORRY IF MY RECOMMENDATION UPSETS YOU. BUT I STAND BY IT.
...IT WAS A JOKE, MASTER IRUKA.
KAKASHI... CAN WE FINISH WITH THIS?
IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, ANYWAY...
...THEY'RE NOT YOUR STUDENTS ANYMORE.
THEY ARE SOLDIERS UNDER MY COMMAND.
...
WHAT A PEST.
...

TAK


GET LOST.


OH, LOOK. ANOTHER LITTLE BRAT.


NARUTO.... YOU SUCK!
I CAN'T BELIEVE WE LOOKED UP TO YOU!!


OOO... HOW COOL!!


HE DID IT AGAIN - STICKING HIS NOSE IN AND MAKING ME LOOK BAD!!


DON'T BE STUPID. I COULD HAVE HANDLED THAT LOSER IF SASUKE HADN'T BUTTED IN!
RIIIGHT.


SHF
THINK YOU'RE PRETTY SMART, DON'T YOU?


COME DOWN, LITTLE SQUIRREL!


KANKURO! DON'T!
!!

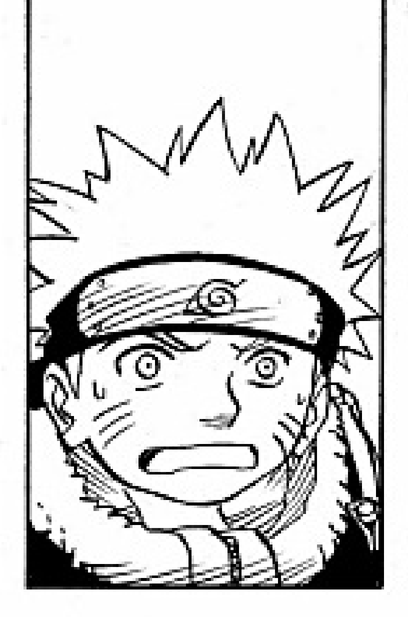

FWUP
TELL ME YOU'RE NOT PLANNING TO USE THE 'CROW!
TOK

: GAARA'S TATTOO SAYS "LOVE."

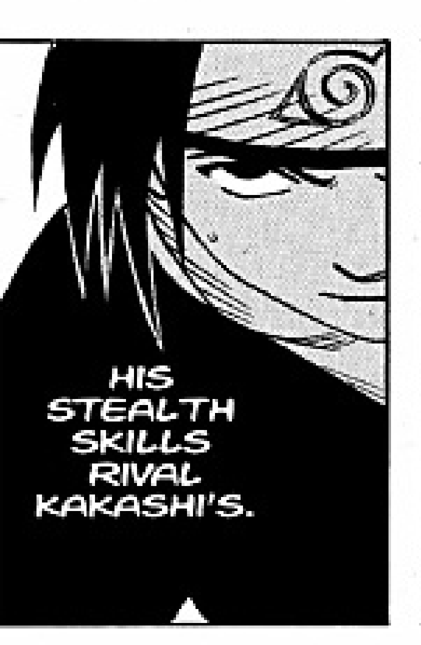



G- GAA- RA...

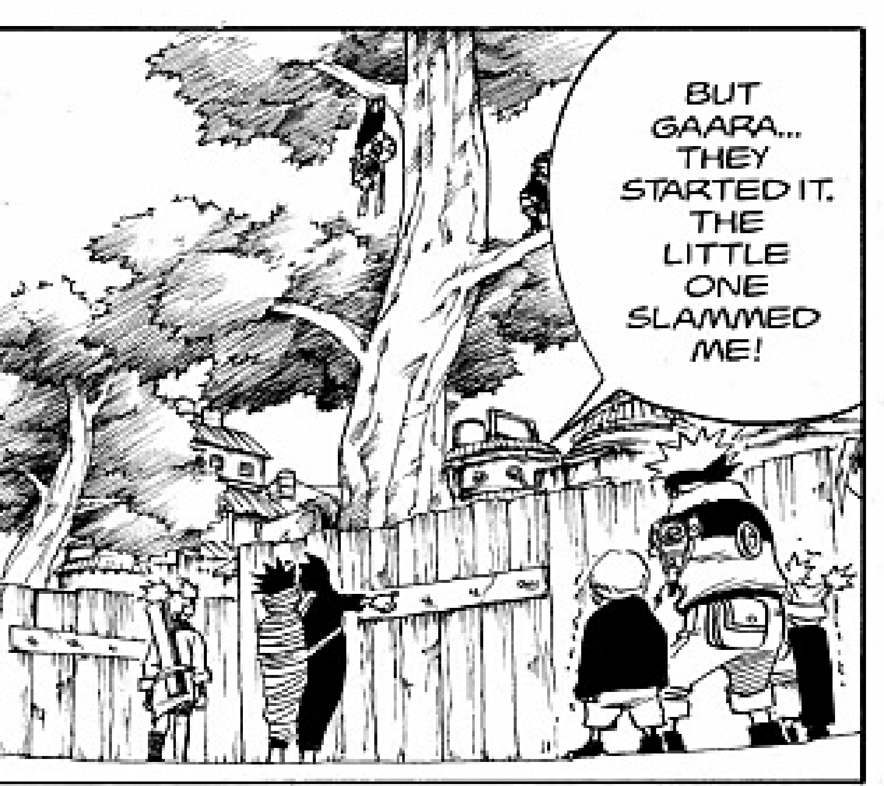







HIS STEALTH SKILLS RIVAL KAKASHI'S.


HE... HE SNUCK UP BESIDE ME... I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A CLUE!


BUT GAARA... THEY STARTED IT. THE LITTLE ONE SLAMMED ME!


IT ANNOYS ME THAT YOU'D LOSE CONTROL IN A QUARREL WITH CHILDREN!
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHY WE CAME HERE?

SHUT UP...

OR I'LL KILL YOU.





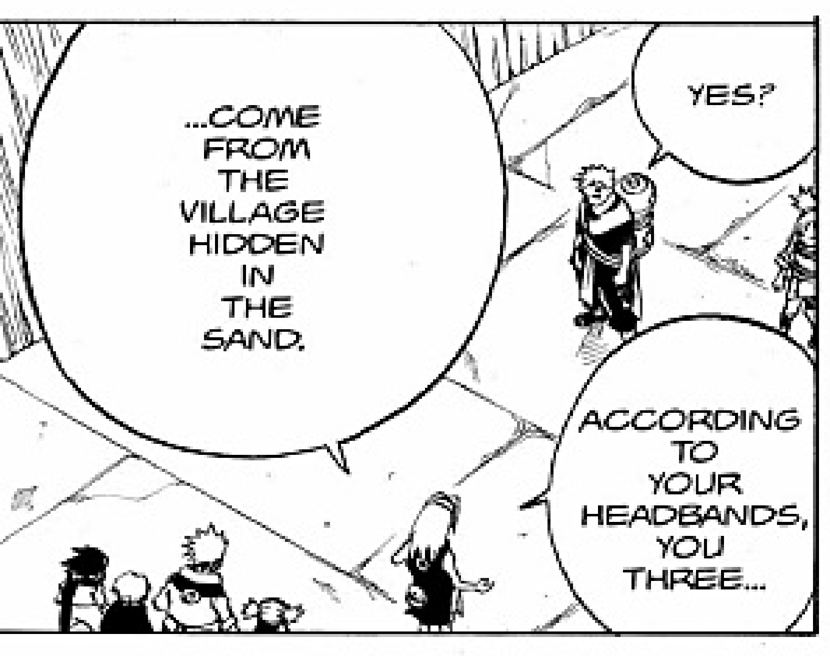


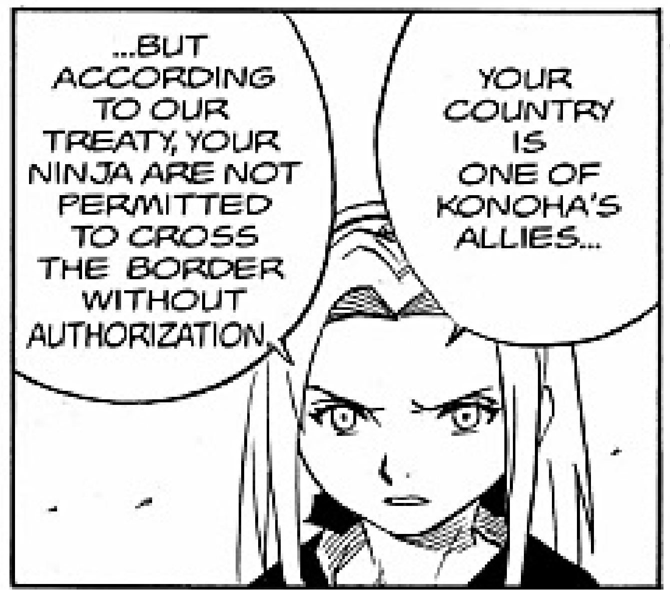


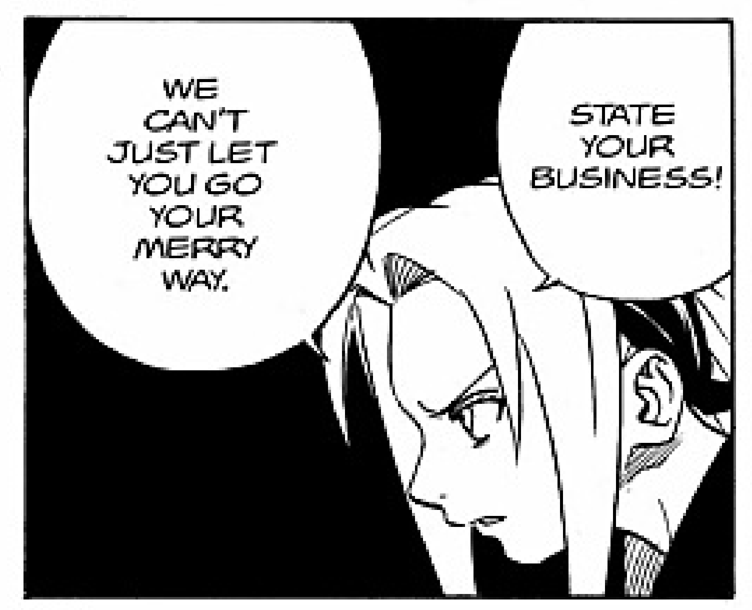


!
I KNOW WE'RE A LITTLE EARLY...
...BUT WE DIDN'T COME HERE TO PLAY AROUND.
SHHM
I SWEAR IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.

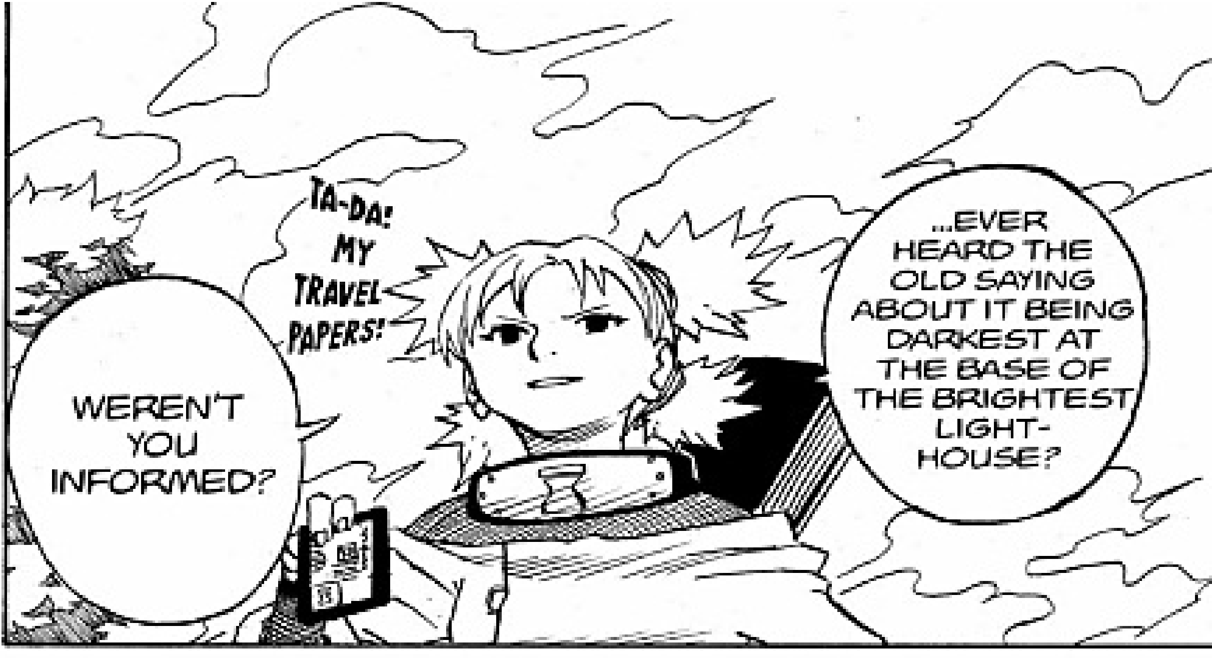


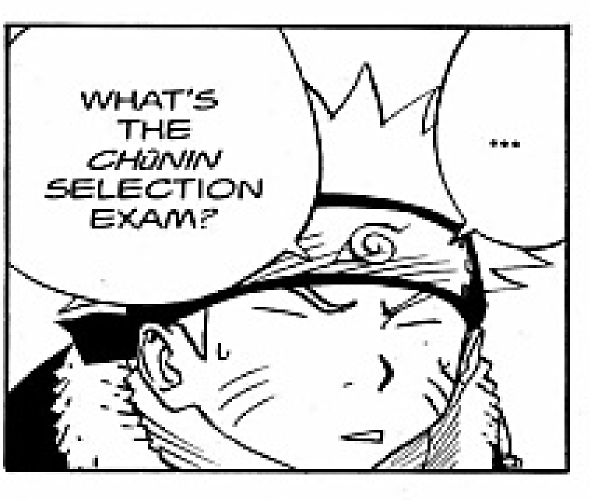







!


WEREN'T YOU INFORMED?
TA-DA! MY TRAVEL PAPERS!
...EVER HEARD THE OLD SAYING ABOUT IT BEING DARKEST AT THE BASE OF THE BRIGHTEST LIGHT-HOUSE?


WHAT'S THE *CHŪNIN* SELECTION EXAM?
...


WE'RE HERE TO TAKE THE *CHŪNIN* SELECTION EXAM
AS YOU GUESSED, WE'RE JUNIOR-LEVEL NINJA FROM THE HIDDEN SAND VILLAGE.

YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW? JUNIOR NINJA ARE SENT FROM THE HIDDEN SAND VILLAGE AND THE MINOR LANDS BETWEEN OUR HOME AND YOURS TO COMPETE AGAINST KONOHA'S OWN CANDIDATES.
WHY TEST US ALL TOGETHER?
MAINLY TO MAINTAIN THE SKILL OF ALL SHINOBI AT THE SAME HIGH LEVEL OF EXCELLENCE. ALSO TO FOSTER FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN NINJA. AND, OF COURSE, TO MAINTAIN THE BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN THE LANDS THEMSELVES.


HEY, KONOHAMARU! MAYBE I SHOULD ENTER THIS CHŪNIN SELECTION EXAM THING TOO, HUH?
LISTEN, YOU! WHEN YOU ASK SOMEONE A QUESTION, IT'S CONSIDERED GOOD MANNERS TO LISTEN TO THEIR ENTIRE ANSWER.
POP
HEY! YOU THERE! WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
HUH?
W-WHO, ME?
NO!
I WAS TALKING TO THE SPOOK BESIDE YOU.
...
!
!
...
GAARA OF THE DESERT, AT YOUR SERVICE.
AND YOU ARE...?
!

UCHIHA SASUKE.

HEH





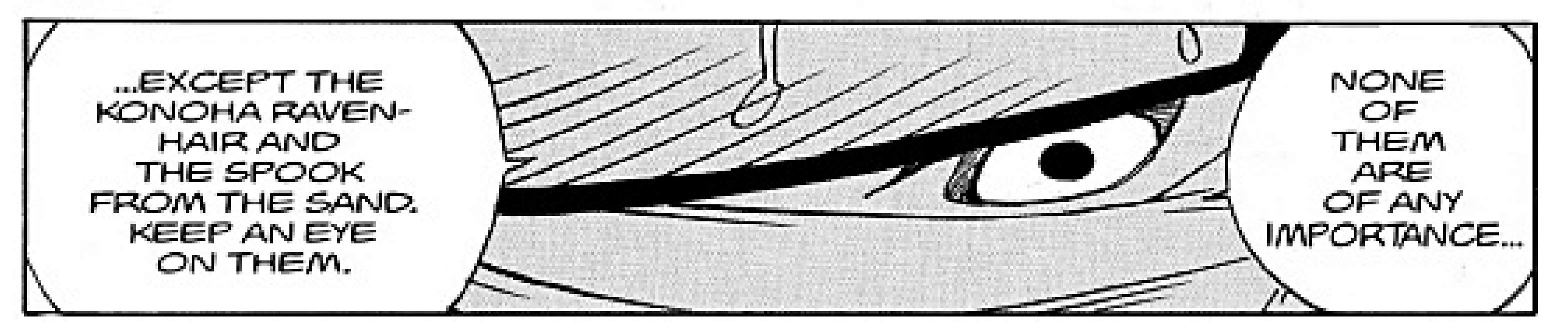




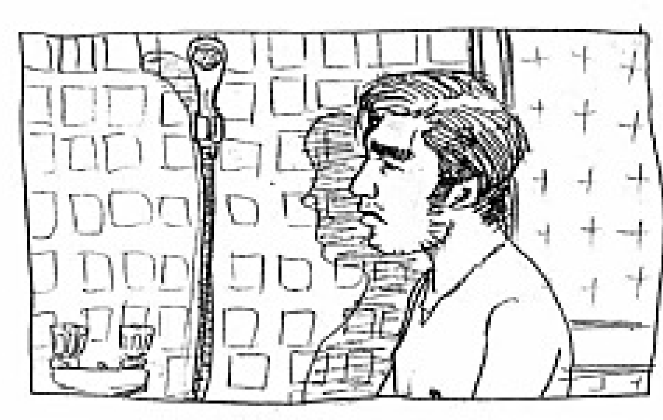
SASUKE!! I AIN'T GONNA TAKE THIS!

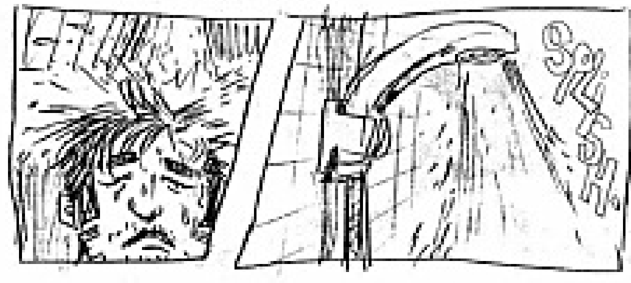
WHERE DO YOU GET OFF STICKING YOUR NOSE IN?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



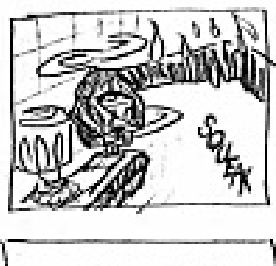
POINTLESS LITTLE STORY











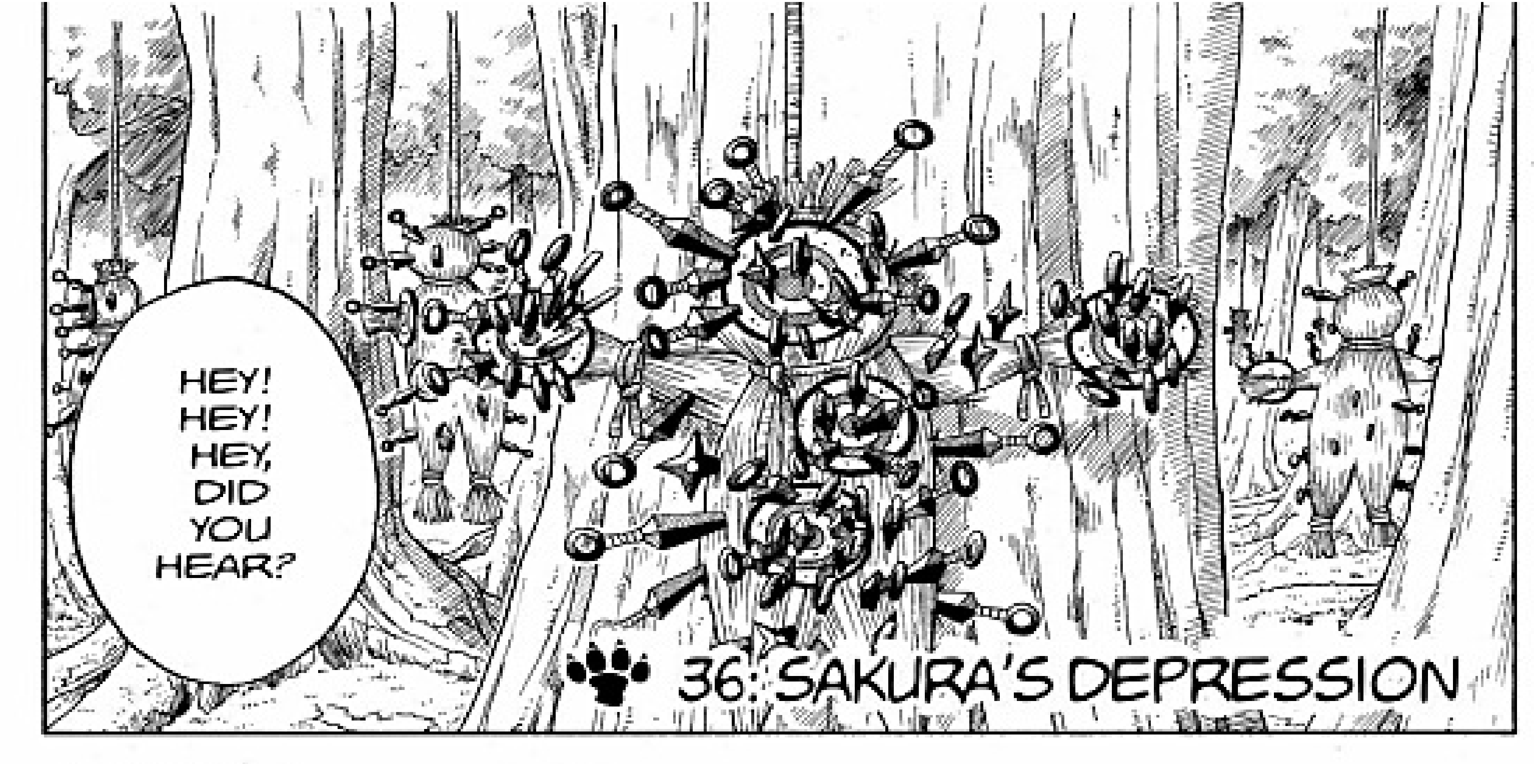




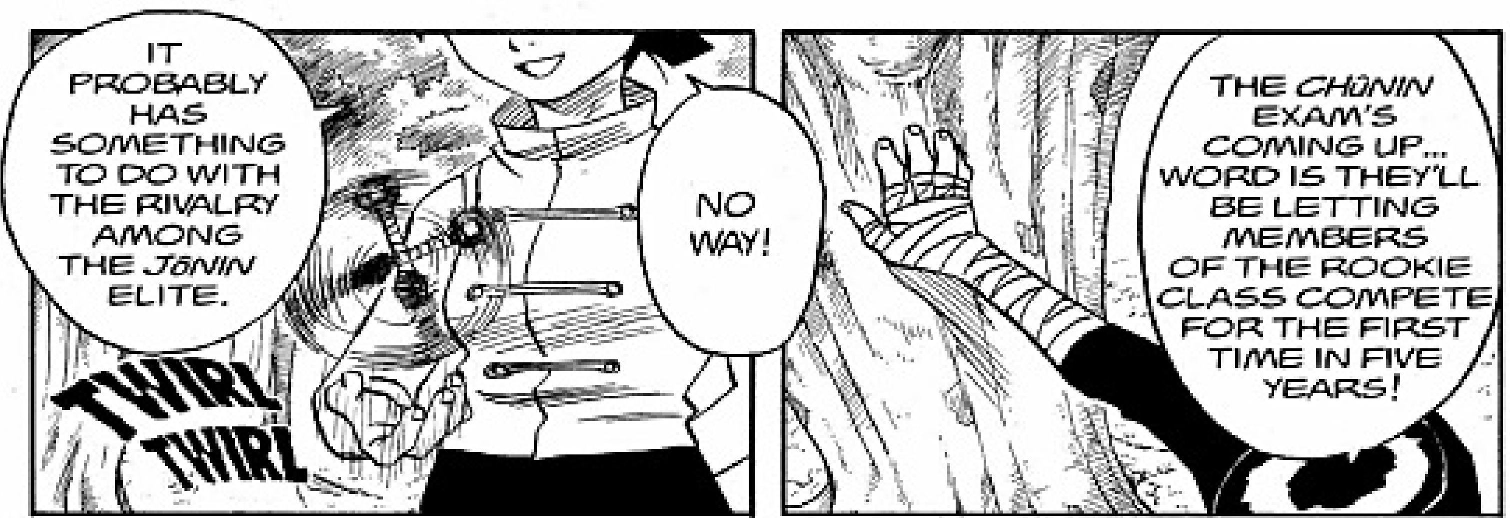
THE END

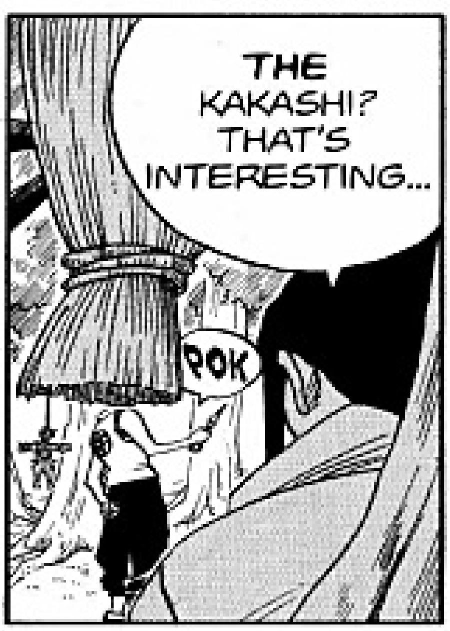
THE EIGHT-FRAME *MANGA* ON THE LEFT BRINGS BACK FOND MEMORIES FOR ME OF KOISHI, THE FRIEND WHO DREW IT FOR ME BACK IN COLLEGE. I HAD BEEN DRAWING *MANGA* SINCE MY HIGH-SCHOOL DAYS, BUT I DIDN'T HAVE A SINGLE FRIEND WHO SHARED MY PASSION. IN COLLEGE, I HEARD OF A GROUP OF MANGA FANS AND ASPIRING ARTISTS WHO CALLED THEMSELVES THE *MANKEN*, OR MANGA LAB. BUT THEY WEREN'T SO MUCH DRAWING MANGA AS THEY WERE PATTING EACH OTHER ON THE BACK FOR DRAWING PIN-UPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS WITH NO ATTEMPT AT STORYTELLING WHATSOEVER. I AVOIDED THOSE PHONIES LIKE THE PLAGUE AND WENT MY OWN WAY, TRYING TO DRAW ACTUAL MANGA.

THEN, ONE DAY, I MET A MAN WHO CLAIMED HE HAD DRAWN AUTHENTIC *MANGA* BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL. I HAD DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER HE WAS ON THE LEVEL, SO I CHALLENGED HIM. I WAS DETERMINED TO FIND OUT WHETHER HE WAS A REAL MANGA ARTIST OR ANOTHER PHONY. I DEMANDED THAT HE DRAW A TWO-PAGE STORY FOR ME ON THE SPOT. SO HE DREW THE MANGA ON THE LEFT AND GAVE IT TO ME. IT WAS MOMENT OF INTENSE JOY FOR ME TO HOLD SOMEONE ELSE'S MANGA IN MY HAND LIKE THAT, FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME, AND I TREASURE HIS MANGA TO THIS VERY DAY.

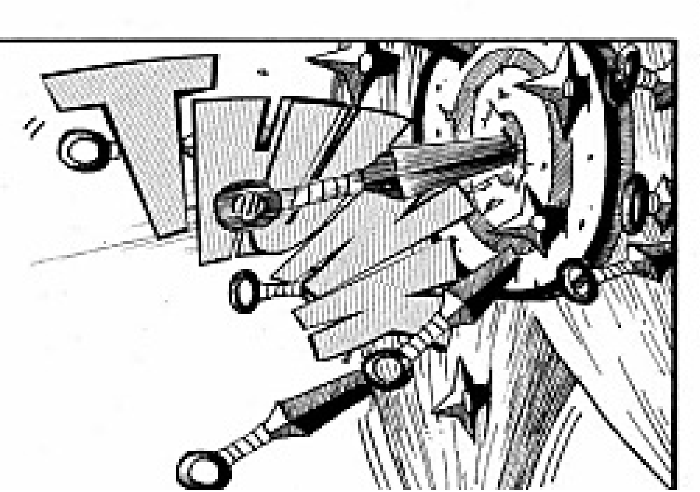


36: SAKURA'S DEPRESSION



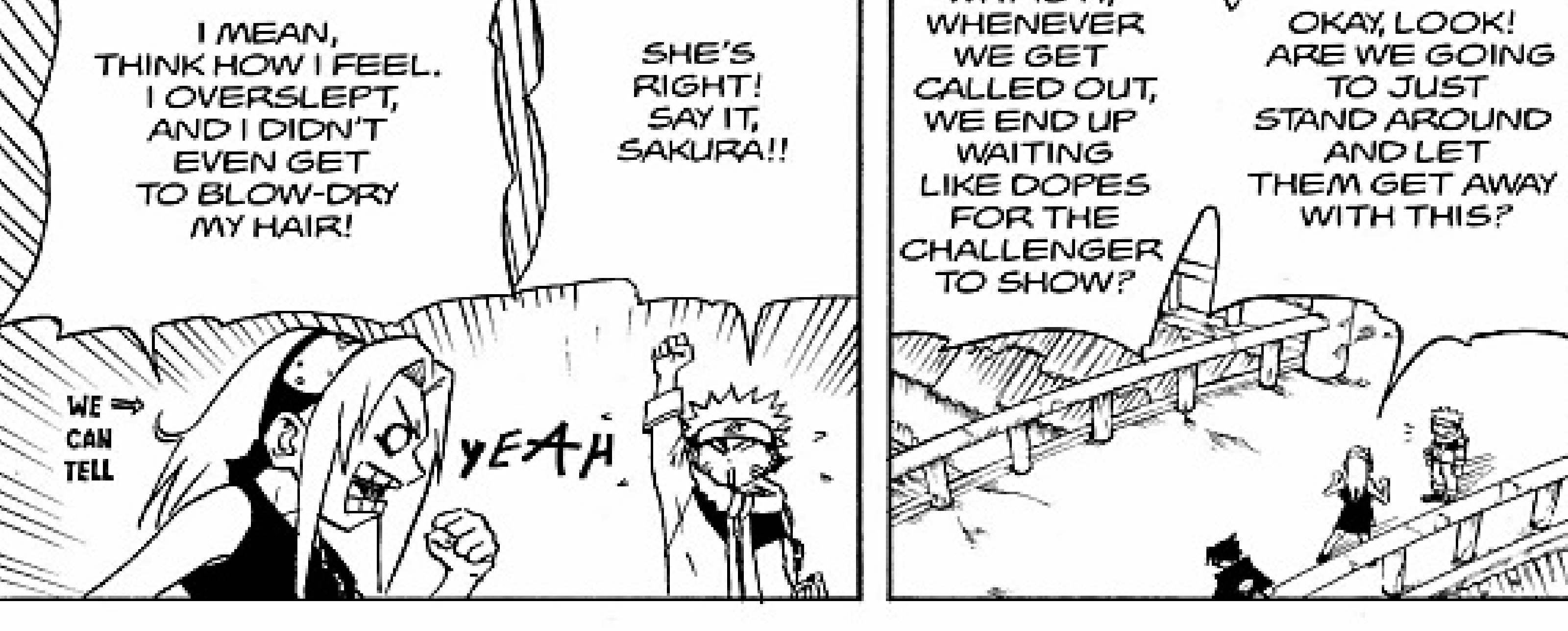







IT ALL HAS A VERY SAD SOUND TO IT.
Number 36:
Sakura's Depression

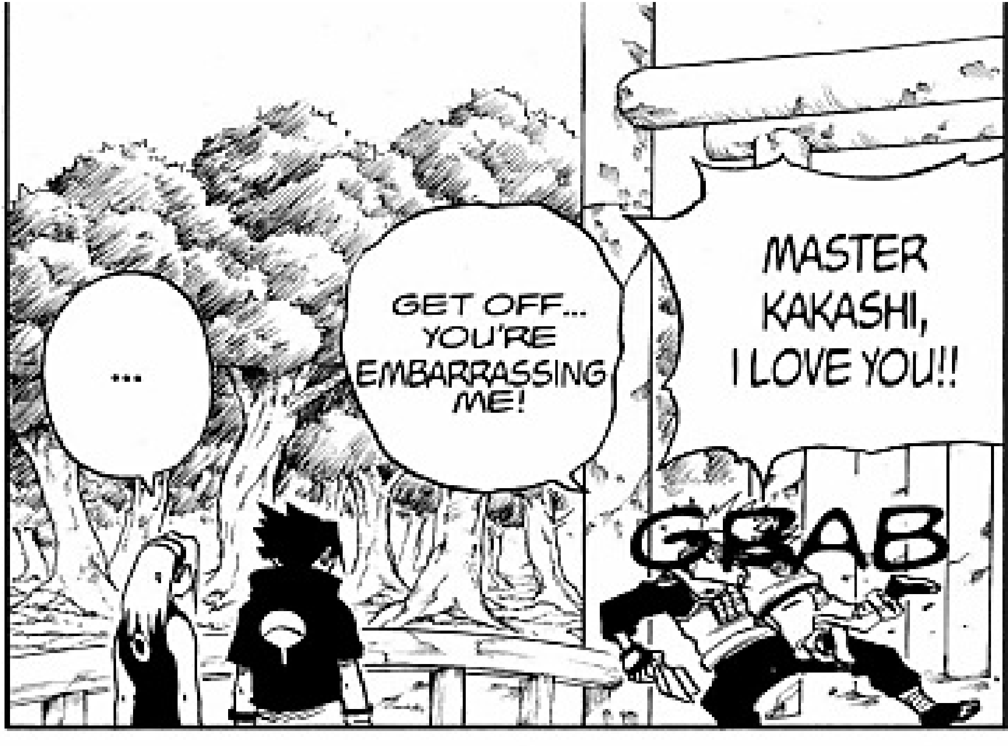
SLUMP
SHEESH!


I MEAN, THINK HOW I FEEL. I OVERSLEPT, AND I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO BLOW-DRY MY HAIR!
WE ⇒ CAN TELL
YEAH
SHE'S RIGHT! SAY IT, SAKURA!!
WHY IS IT, WHENEVER WE GET CALLED OUT, WE END UP WAITING LIKE DOPES FOR THE CHALLENGER TO SHOW?
OKAY, LOOK! ARE WE GOING TO JUST STAND AROUND AND LET THEM GET AWAY WITH THIS?

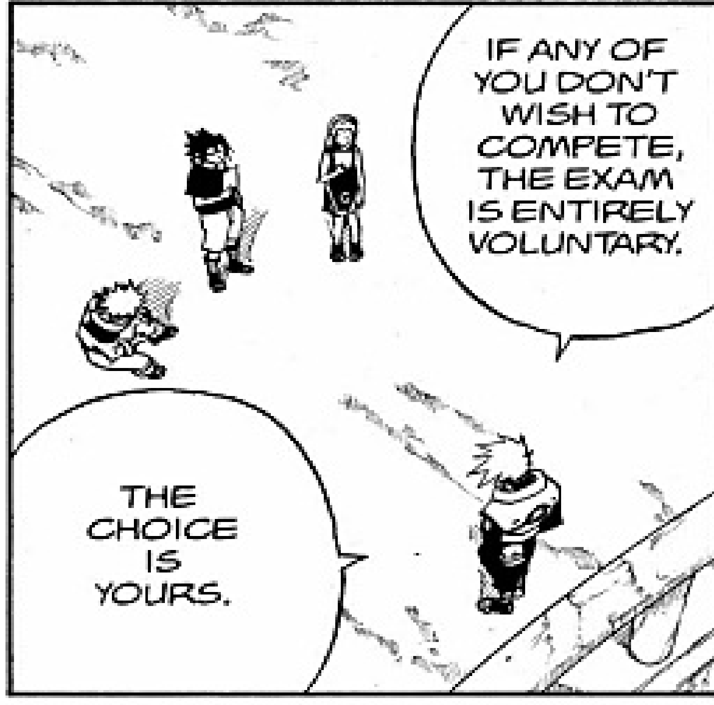

WHY DO THESE TWO ALWAYS WAKE UP FEELING DRAMATIC?
HEH...
EWWW! GROSS!
RRRR
GRRR GRRR

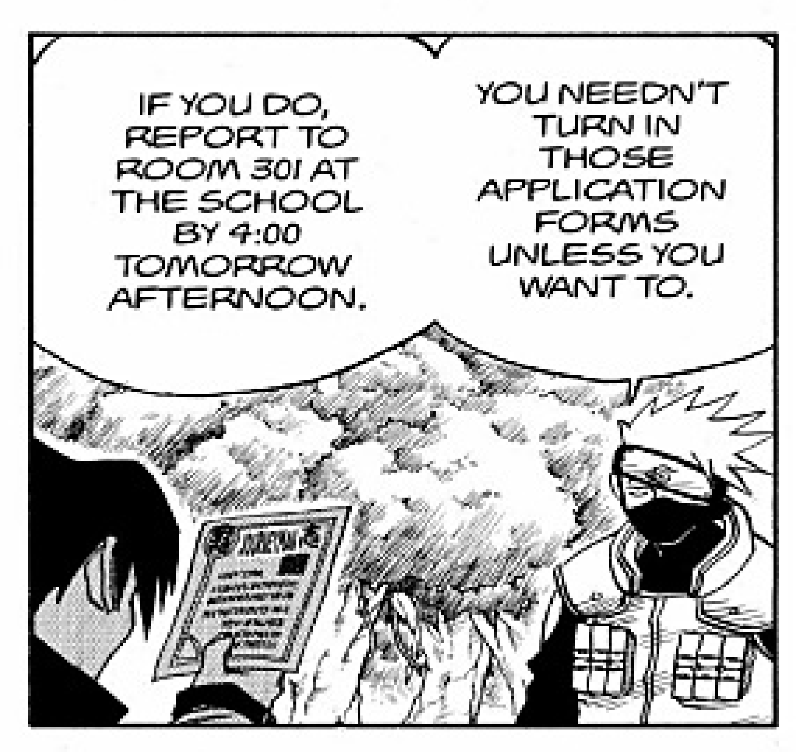

YEAH. IT'S NOT RIGHT. I OVERSLEPT, TOO...
... AND I DIDN'T EVEN PAUSE TO WASH MY FACE OR BRUSH MY TEETH!


MORNING, GUYS!!
TODAY, I WANDERED A BIT FROM THE PATH OF LIFE...
!!
YOU ARE SUCH A LIAR!!
WOULD IT KILL YOU TO AT LEAST PRETEND TO BE SORRY?
IN ANY CASE...
THIS MAY SURPRISE YOU...
BUT I'VE RECOMMENDED ALL THREE OF YOU FOR THE *CHŪNIN* SELECTION EXAM.
HUH?!
...
!
SAY WHAT?!
GOOD ONE, MASTER. YOU ALMOST HAD US.
YOU HAVE TO FILL OUT APPLICATIONS.
JOURNEYMAN

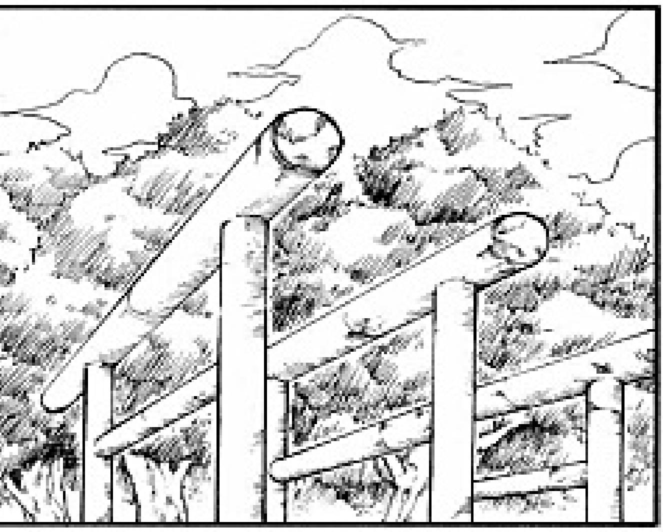

MASTER KAKASHI, I LOVE YOU!!
GRAB
GET OFF... YOU'RE EMBARRASSING ME!
...


HEH HEH HEH HEH


IF ANY OF YOU DON'T WISH TO COMPETE, THE EXAM IS ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY.
THE CHOICE IS YOURS.


YOU NEEDN'T TURN IN THOSE APPLICATION FORMS UNLESS YOU WANT TO.
IF YOU DO, REPORT TO ROOM 301 AT THE SCHOOL BY 4:00 TOMORROW AFTERNOON.


THAT'S ALL!
FWMM

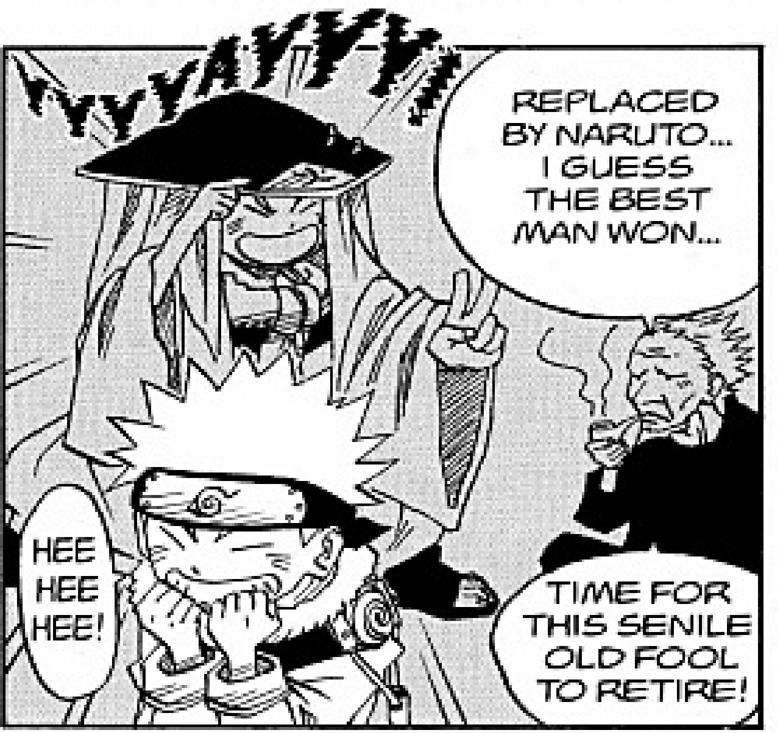


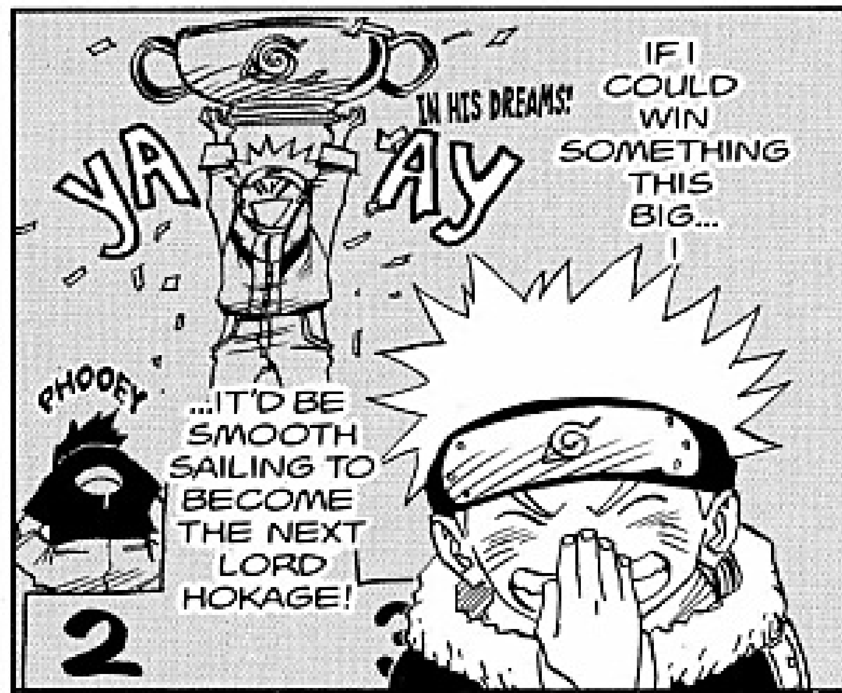
I'LL BET THERE'LL BE A LOT OF TOUGH COMPETITION.
TAK
DUM-DI-DI-DUH... THE JOURNEYMAN NINJA SELECTION EXAM!
TAK





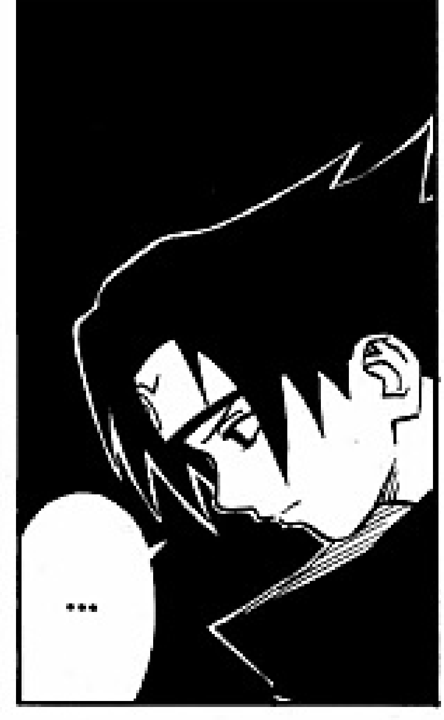




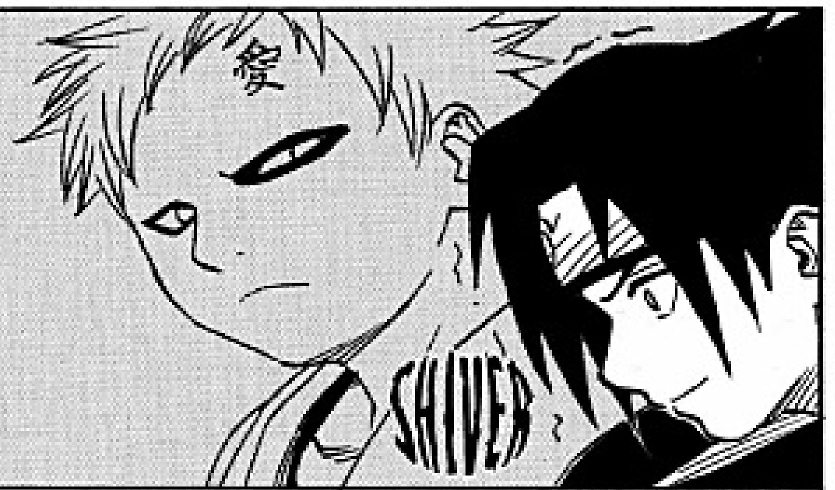




READ THIS WAY



...



I MIGHT GET TO FACE OFF AGAINST THAT SPOOK.
SHIVER



HAH!



...
LA-DI-DI-DA



...



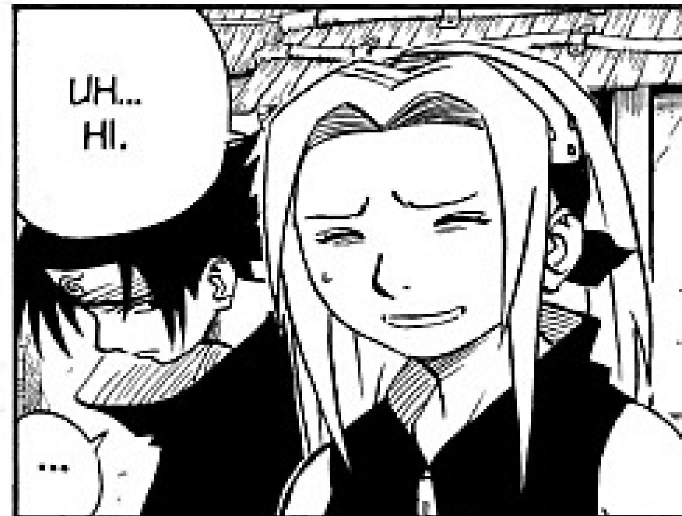
I...
...DON'T WANT TO.

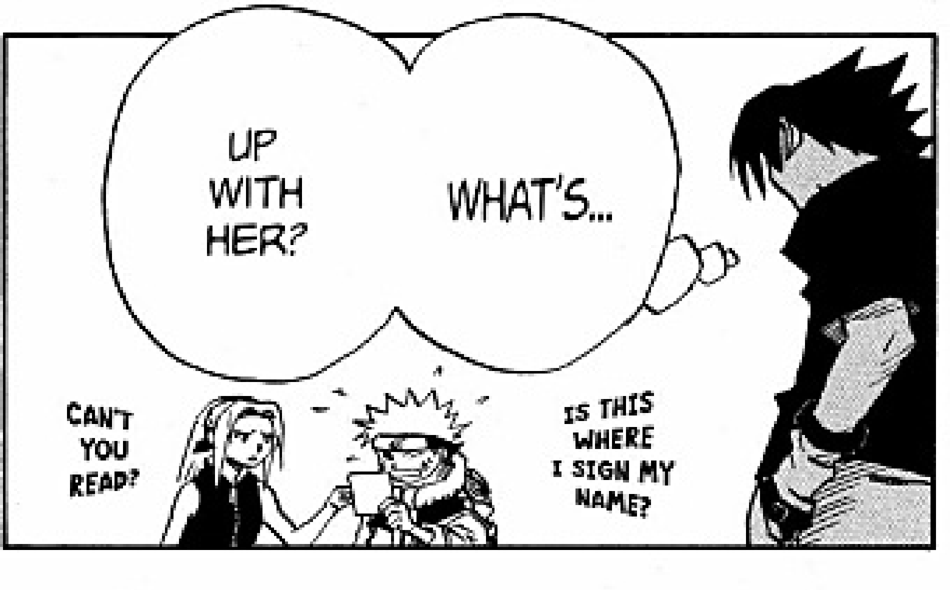


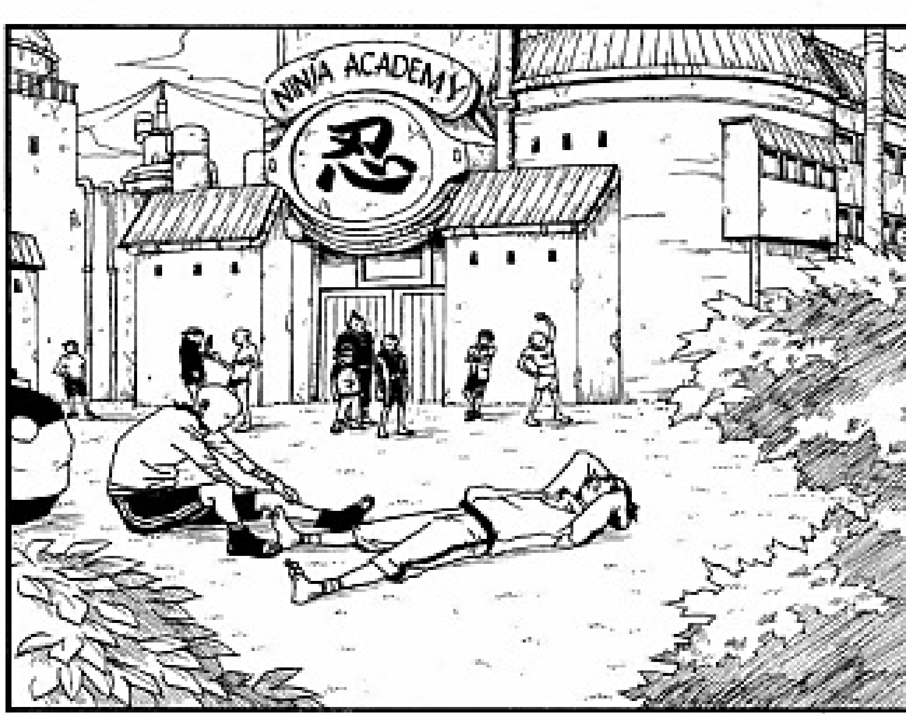
FORGET SASUKE... I CAN'T EVEN KEEP UP WITH NARUTO.
THIS EXAM WOULD BE TOO MUCH FOR ME.


THE NEXT DAY....


酒酒屋
HEY, SAKURA!

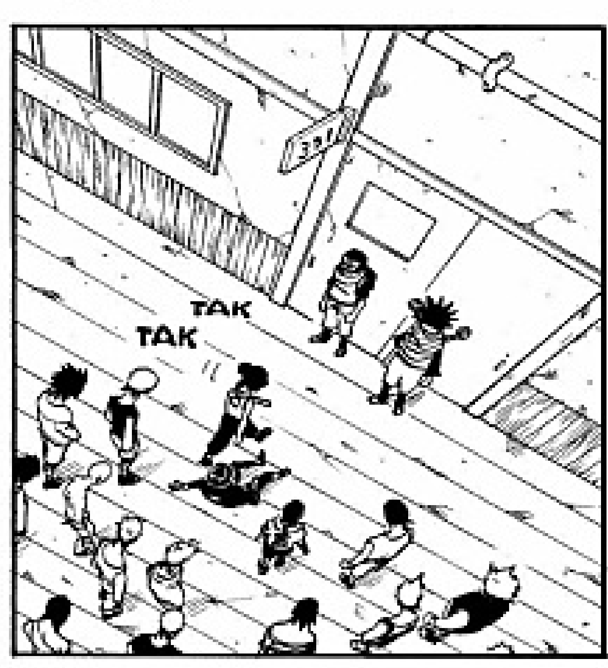

UH... HI.
...


WHAT'S...
UP WITH HER?
IS THIS WHERE I SIGN MY NAME?
CAN'T YOU READ?


NINJA ACADEMY
忍


RUSH
RUSH


IS SOMEONE AS TALENTLESS AS YOU REALLY PLANNING TO TAKE THE *CHŪNIN* SELECTION EXAM?
WHY BOTHER?

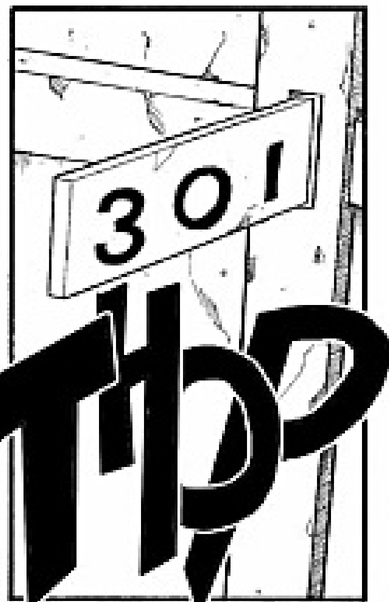

TAK
TAK

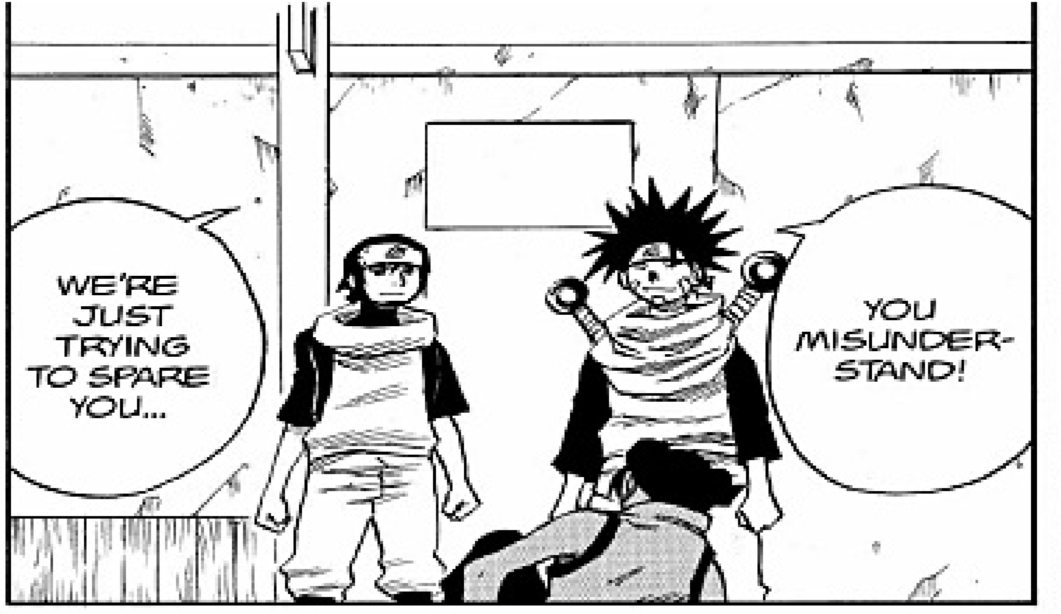

PLEASE... WE'RE BEGGING YOU... LET US IN.


YOU SAID IT!
BUNCH OF WET-BEHIND-THE-EARS SNOTNOSES!
SNERK


...THAT'S JUST CRUEL...!


!!
UHN-


301
THD


WE'RE JUST TRYING TO SPARE YOU...
YOU MISUNDER-STAND!


WHAT DID YOU SAY?

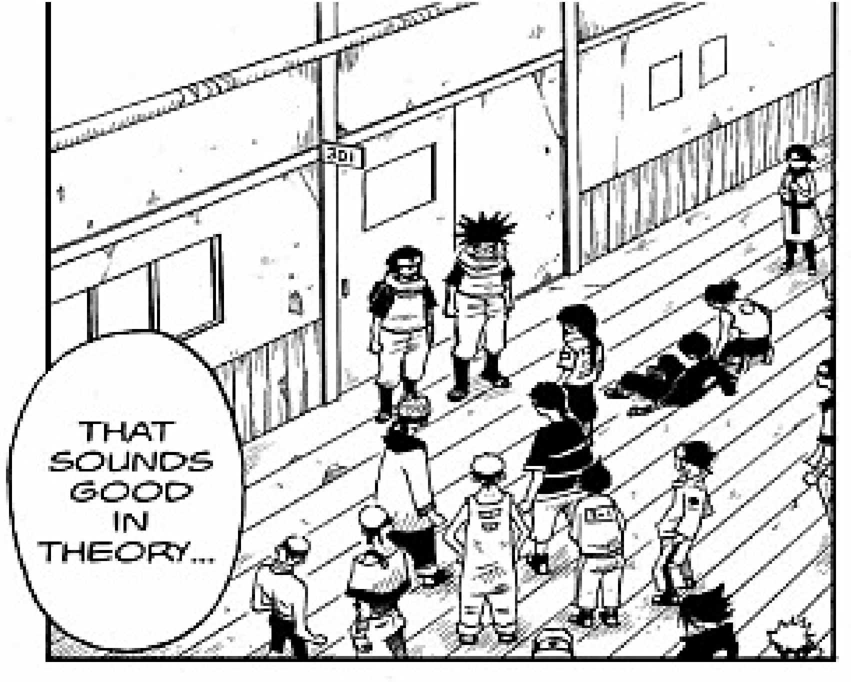

!!
WHOA
AW, MAN

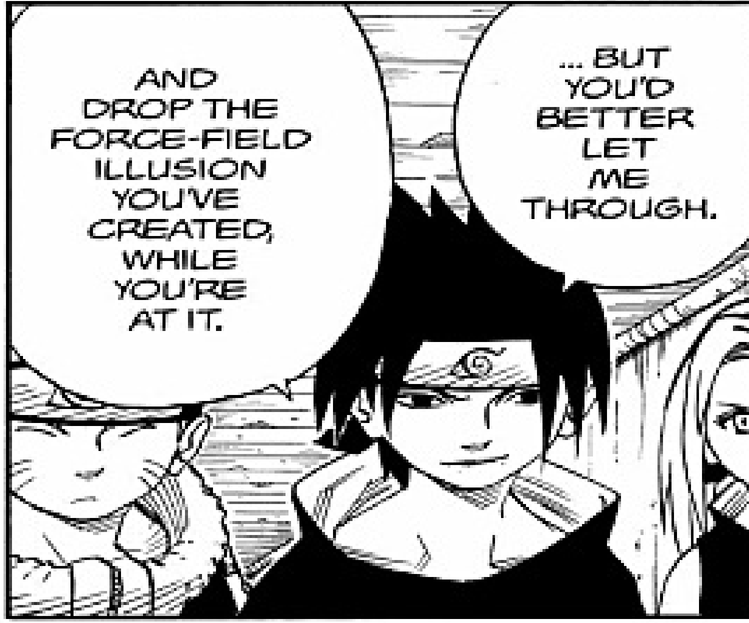

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT, THEN IMMEDIATELY GAVE UP BEING SHINOBI... OTHERS WHO ENDED UP CRIPPLED... SOME REDUCED TO VEGETABLES... WE'VE SEEN IT ALL!
THE *CHŪNIN* EXAM IS INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT... AND WE SHOULD KNOW. WE'VE FAILED THREE TIMES SO FAR.


AND YOU LITTLE PUNKS HAVE THE NERVE TO APPLY?
SNORT


THE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FAILED MISSIONS AND DEAD SHINOBI REST FIRMLY ON THEIR SHOULDERS.
BESIDES THAT, *CHŪNIN* ARE CELL COMMANDERS. THEY LEAD THEIR UNITS.


WE'RE SAVING A STEP BY WEEDING OUT THE OBVIOUS LOSERS BEFOREHAND.


THAT SOUNDS GOOD IN THEORY...


... BUT YOU'D BETTER LET ME THROUGH.
AND DROP THE FORCE-FIELD ILLUSION YOU'VE CREATED, WHILE YOU'RE AT IT.


I HAVE BUSINESS ON THE THIRD FLOOR.
TAK
WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT?
WHO KNOWS?
...!

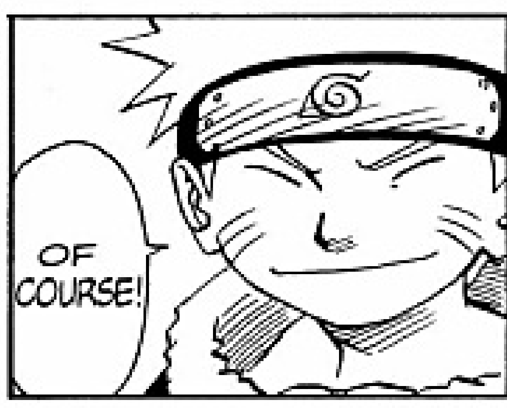

301
HEH...


SO YOU FIGURED THAT OUT, EH?



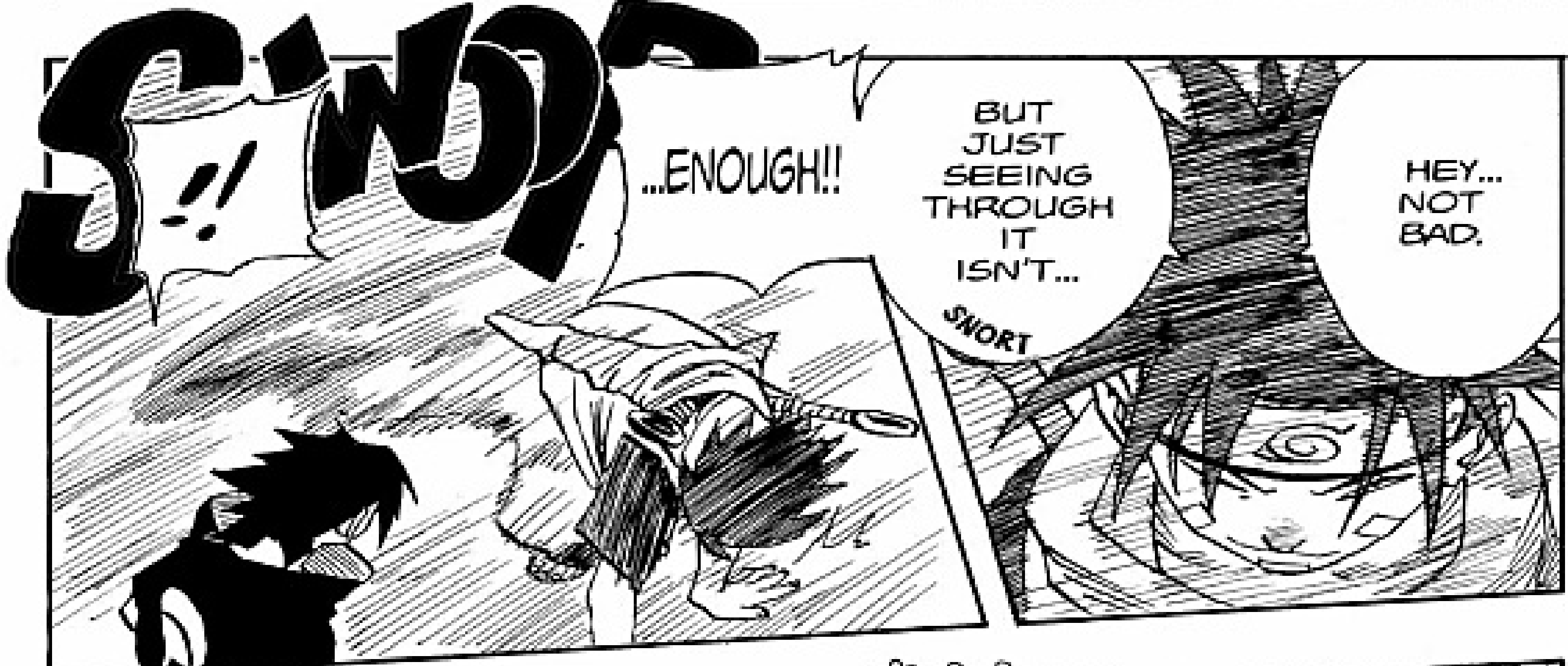

IT WAS EASY. RIGHT, SAKURA?
YOU WERE PROBABLY THE FIRST TO NOTICE IT.
HUH...?
YOU'RE THE MOST ANALYTICAL AND THE BEST IN OUR CELL...
...AT UNDERSTANDING THE ART OF ILLUSION.
...
SASUKE...
...
?
...THANK YOU!..
HEH.
OF COURSE I NOTICED IT.
OBVIOUSLY, WE'RE STILL ON THE SECOND FLOOR.







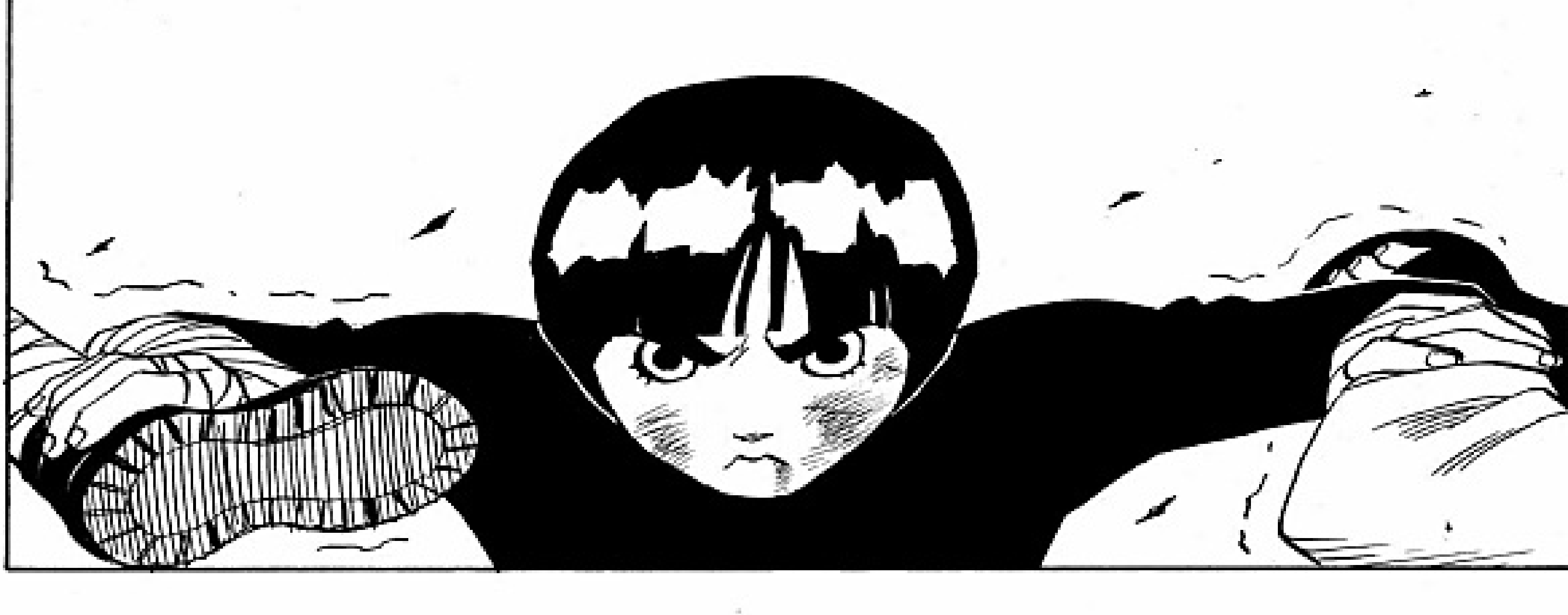


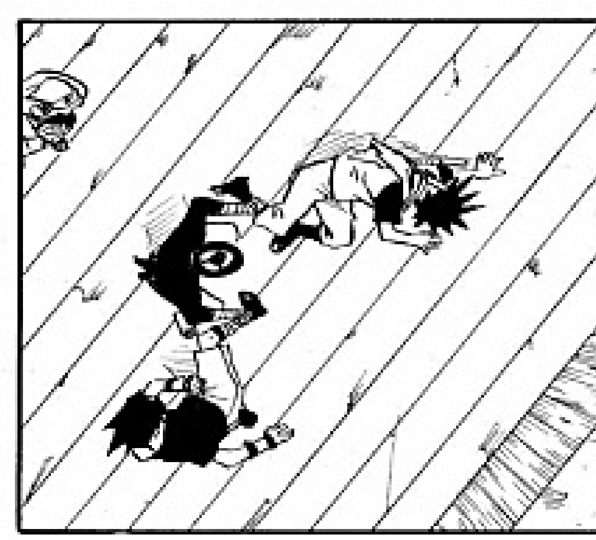


WHAP WHAP

!!

SH HHM






HE'S SO FAST!!
HE PERCEIVED THE ATTACK PATTERNS ON BOTH SIDES AND PLANTED HIMSELF AT THE NEXUS OF BOTH THEIR KICKS... IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?!

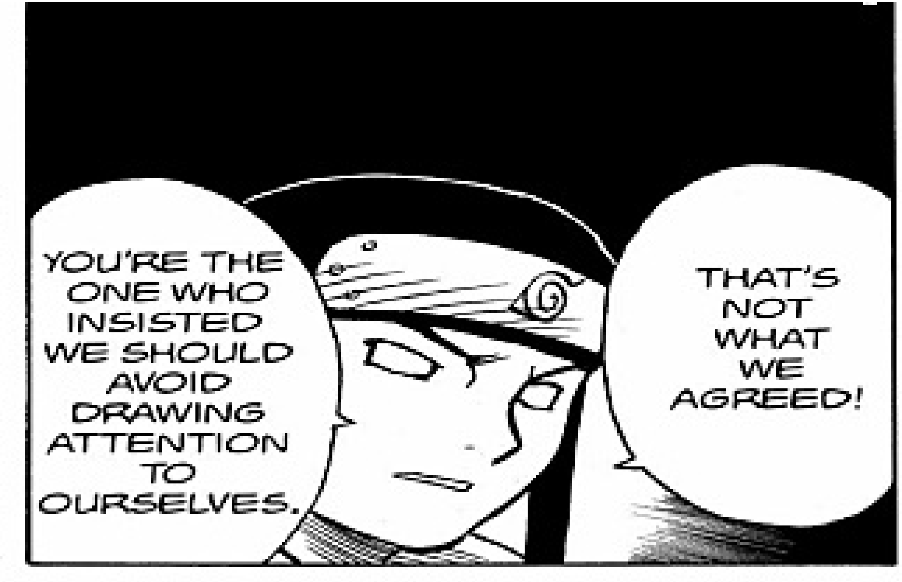

HE'S A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON FROM THE BOY WHO WAS GETTING BEATEN UP JUST A MINUTE AGO.


FWWU

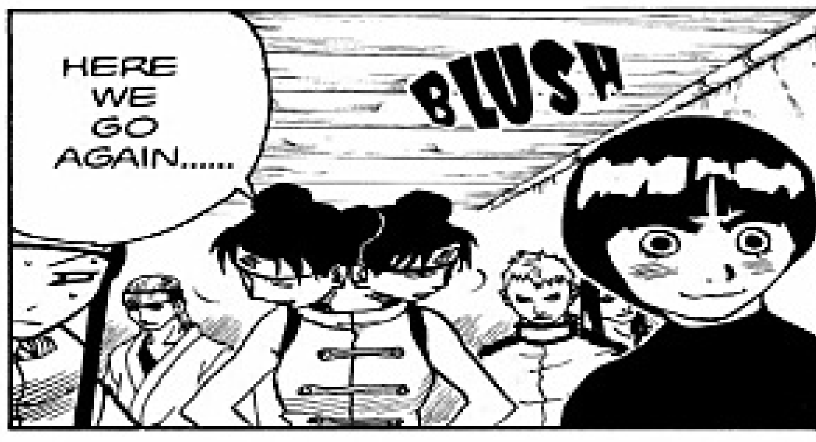

HE BLOCKED MY KICK!
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT HIS CHAKRA.


WHEW
HEY...

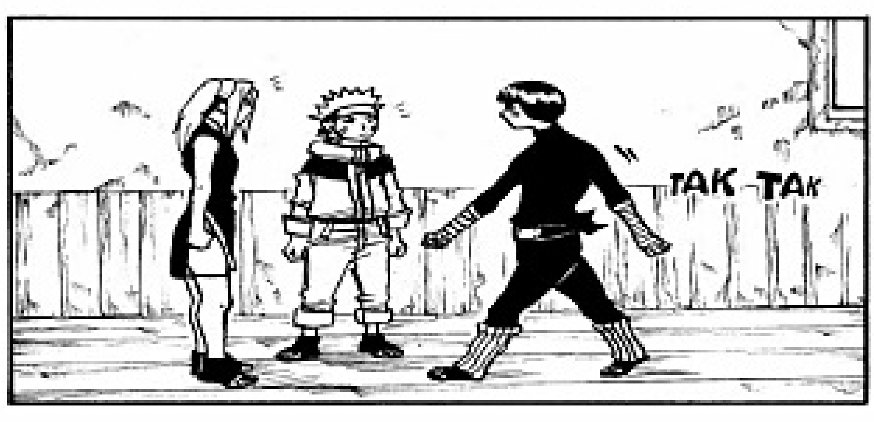
READ THIS WAY

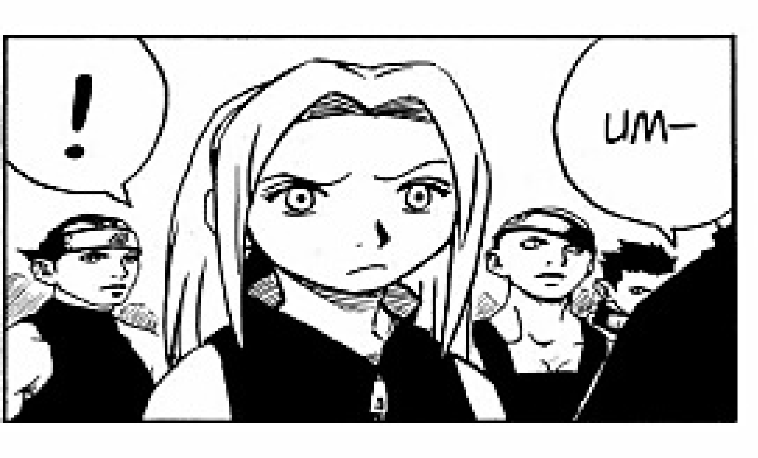












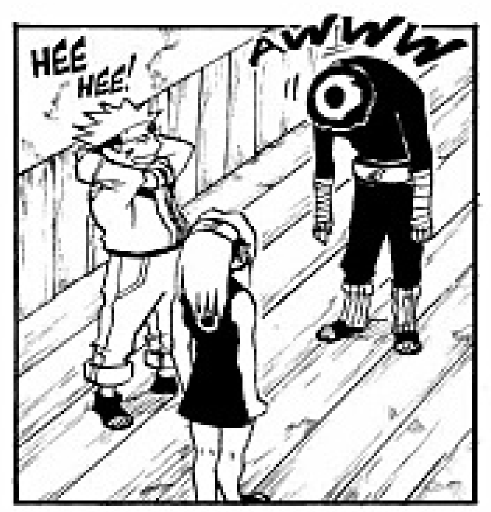


WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO OUT WITH ME?

GLEAM

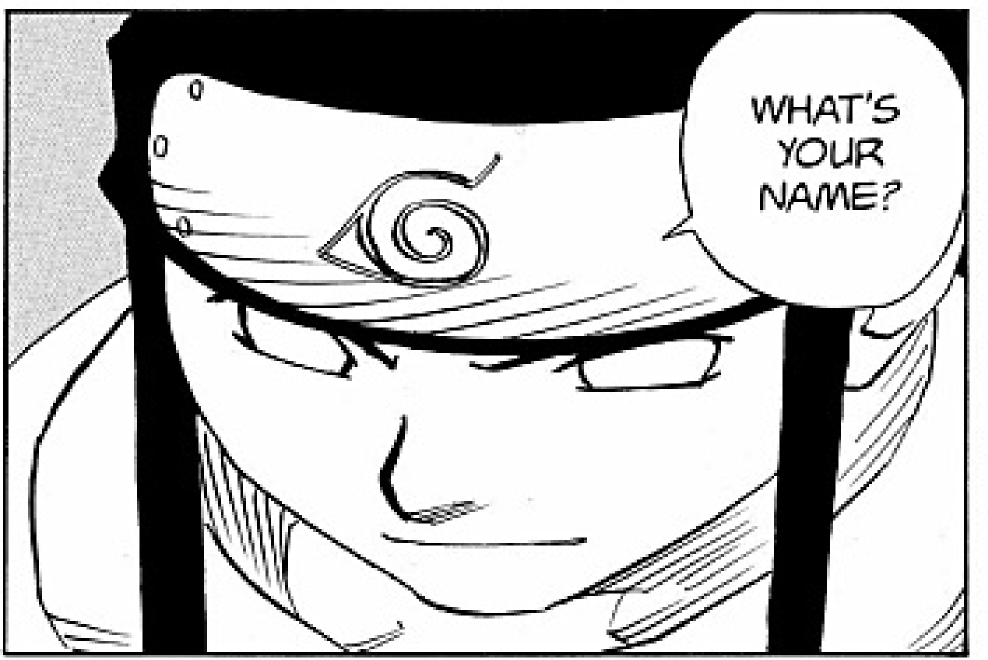
I'LL PROTECT YOU WITH MY LIFE!







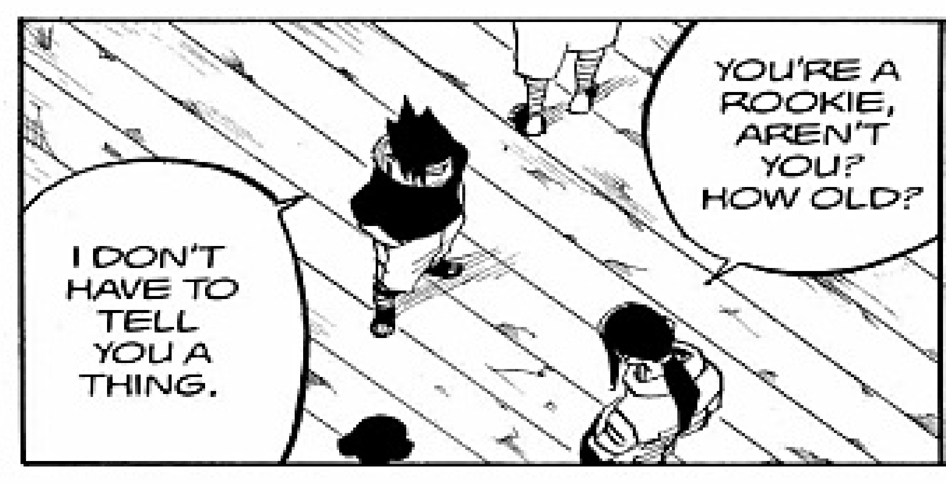


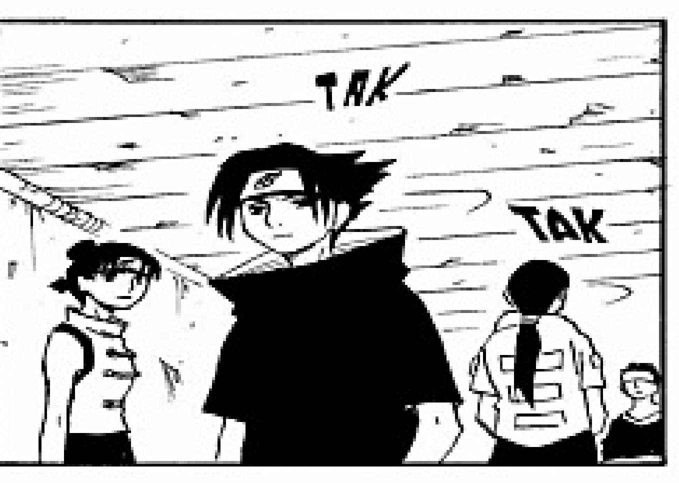


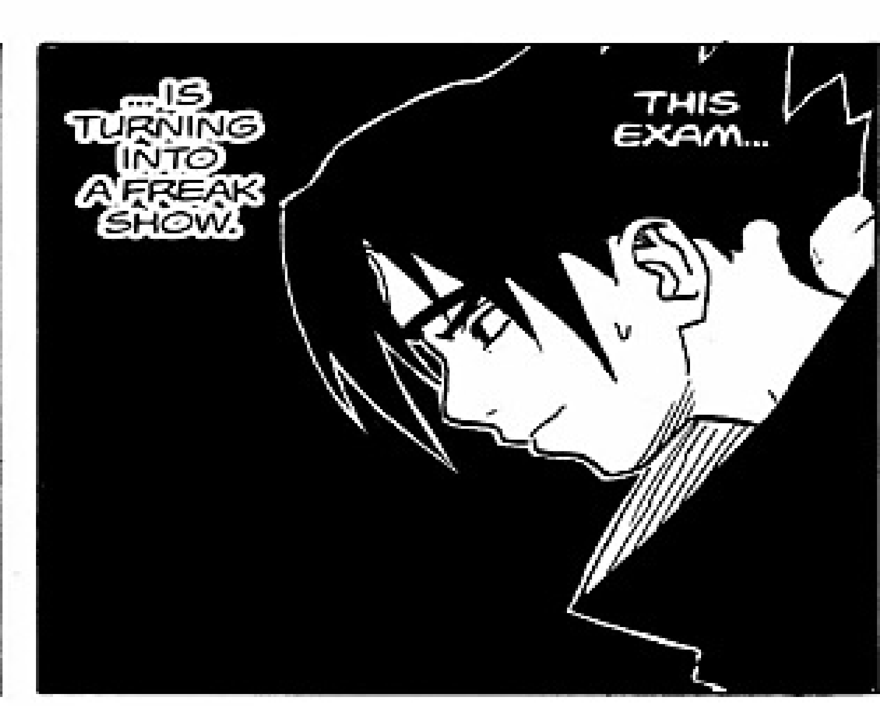
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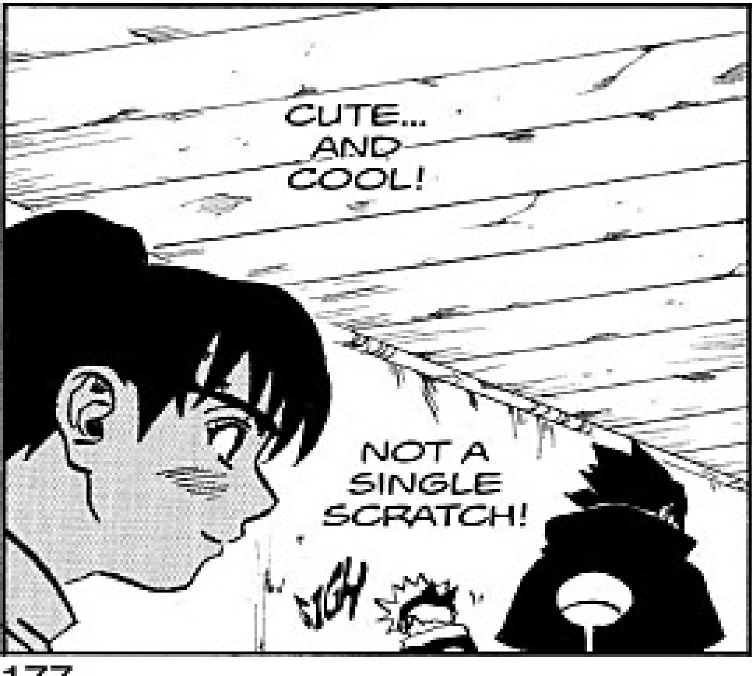


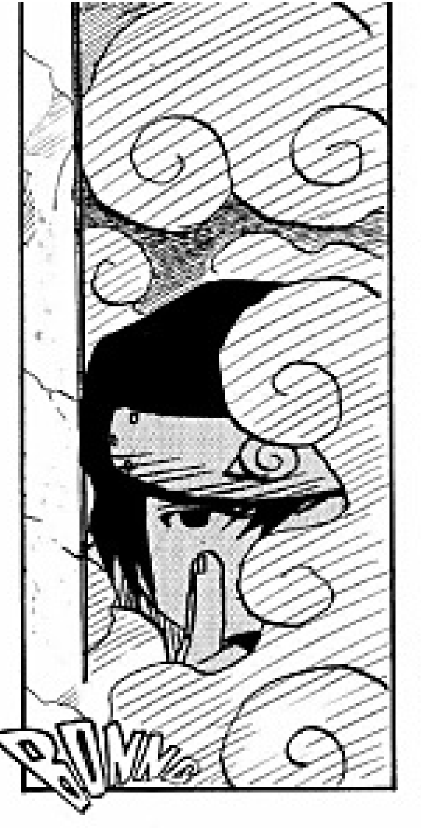


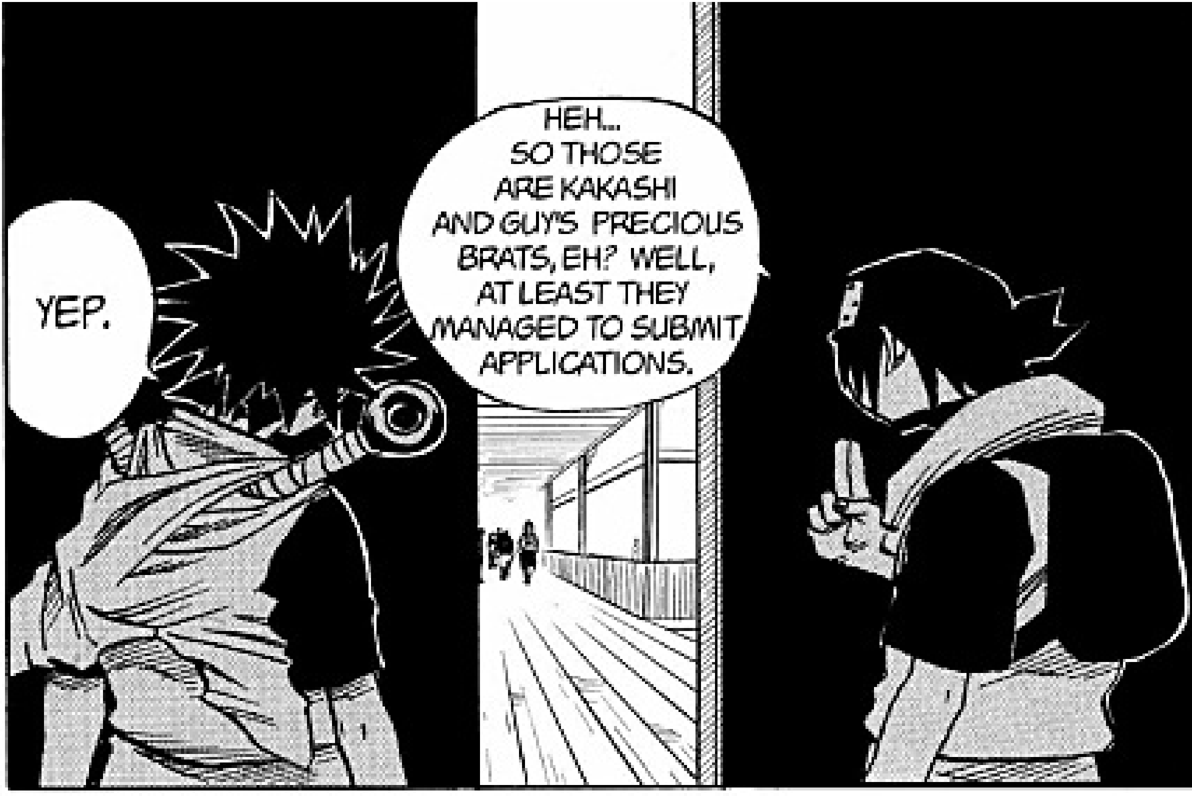











HEH... SO THOSE ARE KAKASHI AND GUY'S PRECIOUS BRATS, EH? WELL, AT LEAST THEY MANAGED TO SUBMIT APPLICATIONS.
YEP.


NOW! SASUKE, NARUTO, LET'S GO!!

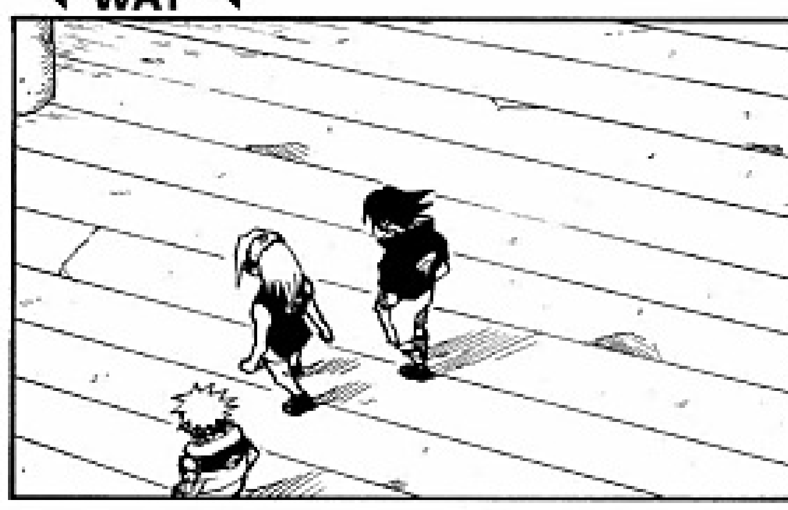

IT LOOKS LIKE WE CAN AMUSE OURSELVES WITH THIS YEAR'S CROP.
SNORT
A LITTLE PERK FOR BEING THE PROCTORS.

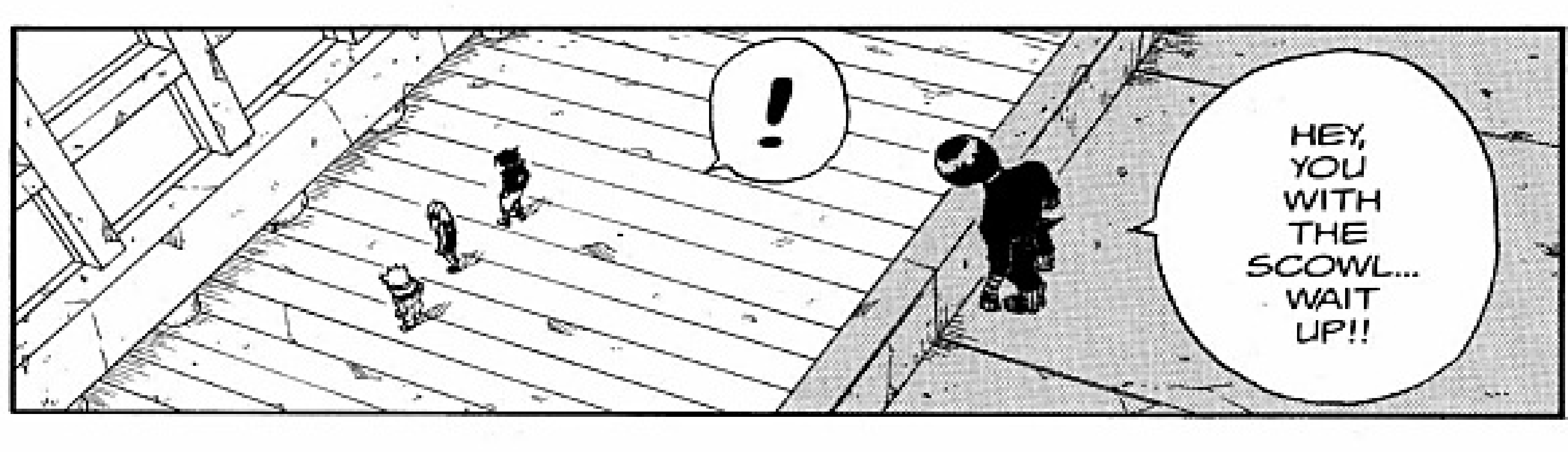

...
LET'S GO, LEE. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?


STOP PULLING
TRA LA-LA
SIGH

















TO BE CONTINUED IN **NARUTO** VOL.5!